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BLITZ

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SWEET WILLIAM

Billy Idol in New York

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In September BLITZ is five years old. The September issue, out on August 29, is a special birthday issue — more pages, more colour, more everything. And still only 75 pence — miss it at your peril.

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ISSN 0263-2543

Erratum: apologies to **TONY BARRATT** whose superb photographs of **Nic Fogg**, used in the last issue of BLITZ were mistakenly credited to another photographer.



Richard Croft

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Is it that time already? Now that 1985 is halfway to 1986, Tom Eliot looks back on the first six months.



WAR was BIG in the first half of 1985. The video for Paul Hardcastle's 19 gave Top Of The Pops a morbid fascination for a few weeks, with its footage of dead and dying soldiers in Vietnam. They look pretty good, but can you really dance to them? ● The single neatly coincided with the tenth anniversary of the fall of Saigon ● In Europe, the fortieth anniversary of VE Day gave Ronald Reagan a chance to visit little old Europe and make a few of his obligatory gaffes. Best of all was his decision to pay a visit to Bitburg cemetery, which just happens to be the resting place of more than a few former members of the SS ● Not among them is Princess Michael's father, who was revealed to have been at one time a serving officer in Hitler's elite ● Reagan continued his own misguided war against the Nicaraguan government by supplying massive aid to the anti-communist Contras ● Global politics took on a suitably Hollywood tone as Star Wars became the major sticking point in East-West arms negotiations ● In Russia, Constantin Chernenko died, to be replaced by Mikhail Gorbachev, who is unusual for two reasons — he is under seventy and his wife has dress sense ● The Gulf War between Iraq and Iran rumbled on and nobody seemed to notice. Likewise in Lebanon, the horror of Beirut appeared unstoppable ● On the home front, the miners' battle ended in defeat. Within a matter of

weeks the NCB began to announce pit closures

● Victory over the miners provided only a brief respite for Margaret Thatcher during a period when the Tories slumped at the polls and her own standing suffered some severe blows. She went to South East Asia and needed Denis to remind her where she was ● **Oxford University decided that she wouldn't be given an Honorary Degree** ● Former Foreign Secretary Francis Pym led a revolt of sorts in the shape of the pressure group Conservative Centre Forward ● **As it happened, football provided a chance for Thatcher to demonstrate a bit of Falklands resolve. After rioting at Luton, Chelsea and Birmingham, amongst others, a season of unrest ended with a chain of circumstances that left 38 dead in Brussels** ● The ensuing over-reaction was only matched by the government's and the tabloids' remarkable discovery that heroin addiction is a Big Problem. The resulting government-sponsored advertising campaign is unlikely to do much to ease the problem ● **In the Falklands a new runway was unveiled — it cost £276 million pounds and no doubt the Argentines are suitably grateful** ● The government were less than grateful to a couple of their civil servants. Clive Ponting went to court for revealing a few secrets about the Belgrano. The judge said guilty. The jury said not ● **Cathy Massiter's revelations of MI5 phonetapping on Channel Four's 20/20 Vision were censored by the IBA and then they changed their minds** ● Michael Grade declared war on ITV after Thames successfully filched Dallas from the BBC. The public declared war on Michael Grade when he suggested that Dr Who had run its course ● **The Mirror took The Sun to court for 'spoiling' its exclusive on**

S

A

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murdered playmate Dorothy Stratten. The Sun came out on top ● Norman Parkinson also won out over Private Eye when they hoped that the same mud might stick twice. His rehabilitation continues ● **Newcomers to the newstands were Mizz and Etcetra, two magazines aimed at the young female market and one of which had a very nice logo indeed** ● Meanwhile a rash of speculation surrounded the identity of Neil Spencer's replacement as editor of NME when he leaves later this year. Burchill? Elms? Contenders for the editorship of Sounds were less numerous ● **Dennis Taylor and Barry McGuigan both became world champions, in snooker and boxing respectively, whilst Howard Kendall took Everton to the League Championship and the Cup Winners Cup Final, proving that nice guys do sometimes come out on top** ● Ian Botham was fined £100 for possessing marijuana and then returned to the England Cricket team along with the banned South African tourists ● **Chas and Di toured Italy and in a brief regression to a former century the Queen allegedly forbade the heir apparent from celebrating mass with the Pope** ● Wham went to China and stumbled into a massive cultural gap ● **Bruce Springsteen came to Britain amidst the most hysterical media frenzy for quite some time** ● Prince and Michael Jackson made somewhat briefer visits to our shores. The former decided he didn't want to come back. The latter decided we weren't so bad after all ● **A tramp visited Tony Benn's garden and liked it so much he decided to live there** ● The House Of Lords made it onto TV and turned out to be as boring as most people had expected ● **More exciting, at least to begin with, was the arrival of Max**

Headroom, who gave a new look to TV presentation. After a while he became as annoying as all the Radio One DJ's on Top Of The Pops ● Also in need of a decent presenter is Soul Train, which otherwise was a welcome change from the ageing Tube ● **And new on the box were East Enders, an updated weather report on BBC and a surrogate Selina on Breakfast Time** ● Surrogate motherhood made the news and proved to be good money as long as you could be sure to sell your story afterwards ● **Clive (Quantum Leap) Sinclair unveiled the 'revolutionary' C5 electric car, which was generally considered as dangerous as it was useless** ● The Times celebrated its 200th anniversary and Rupert Murdoch decided to become an American citizen to aid his gradual takeover of the western media ● **Neil Kinnock got himself photographed with such leftist luminaries as Fidel Castro and Billy Bragg** ● In the music world, Go-Go missed the 'commercial success' stage between 'very trendy' and 'very boring'. The Jesus & Mary Chain proved that there's still room for a bit of outrage, however contrived or not it may be. The Fine Young Cannibals appeared out of nowhere to make the finest single of the half year ● **The trend for American sixties-influenced bands like Lone Justice, The Long Ryders, etc. suddenly gained credibility when the police declared war on hippies in Wiltshire** ● In the cinema, Dance With A Stranger, Brazil, Witness, Blood Simple and Amadeus were the ones most worth seeing. Somewhat disappointing were A Passage To India, The Cotton Club and Beverly Hills Cop ● **And finally, by far the best story of the year so far — Ronald Reagan has been nominated for the 1985 Nobel Peace Prize.**

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P R I N T



MARC ISSUE AT LARGE WITH THIS MONTH'S CROP OF PUBLICATIONS.

● The only work of fiction that has crawled onto my desk for scrutiny this month is actually a mere semi-fiction. *The Fruit Palace* by Charles Nicholl (Heinemann, £9.95) is a tarted-up travel book which tells "a story" about the trade of cocaine in Colombia. The author, in his Author's Note, claims: "this is not a tract for or against the trafficking of drugs, it's simply a story." Since the story, by virtue of its hanging-around-in-bars and street corners, tends to miss the meaning of what is happening, *The Fruit Palace* remains pretty much a tarted-up travel book. It isn't an easy subject to write about honestly, but if Nicholl knew he would have to play so coy, why did he bother writing this at all?

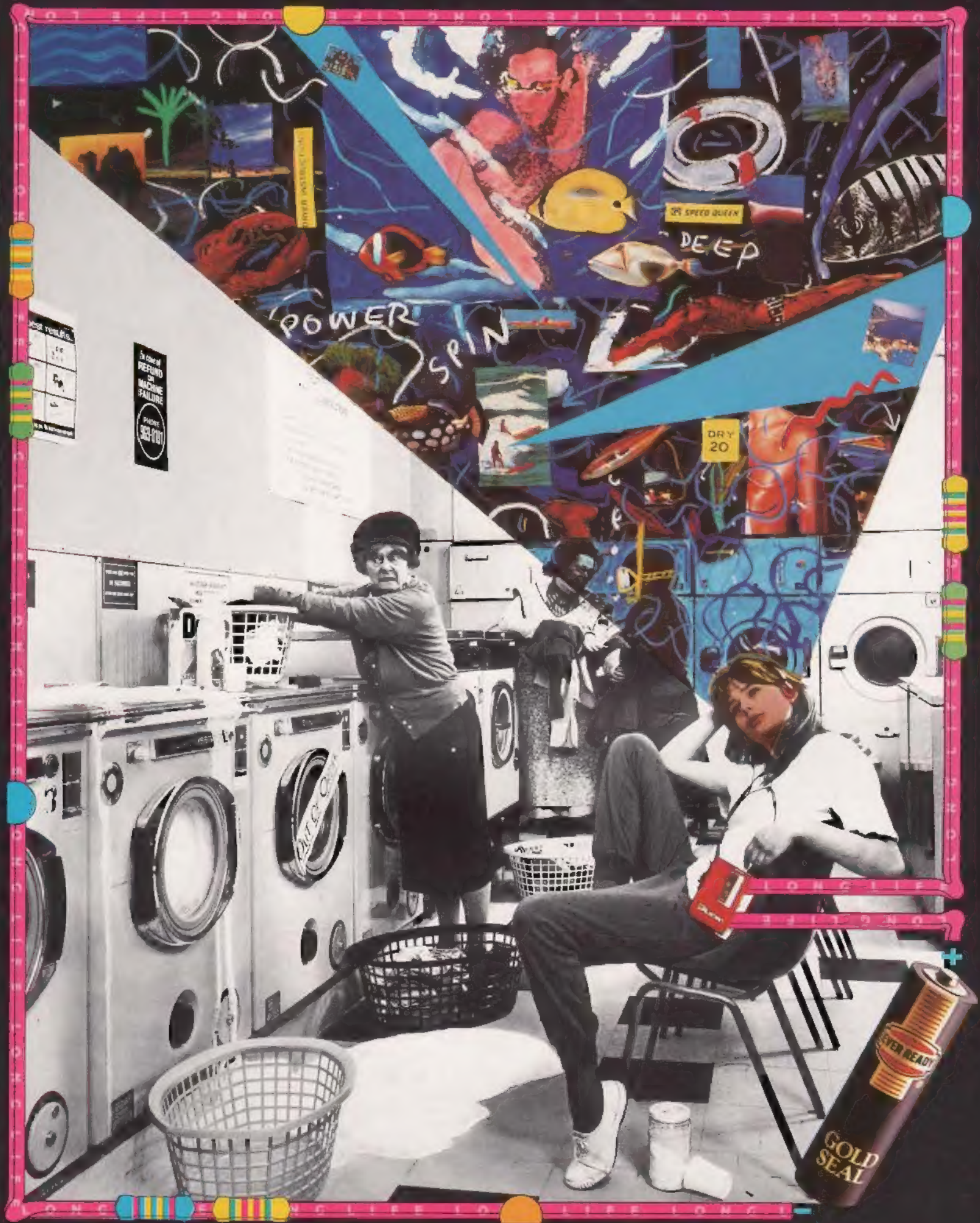
Come Together: John Lennon In His Time by Jon Wiener (Faber £7.95) is a lucid, elegantly written, well-researched, engrossing — and completely daft — attempt to canonise John Winston Ono Lennon as a Great American Radical. I wouldn't want to do Wiener down — he has an obvious talent for documentary writing, his prose is peppy, pacey and pert, his structure is intelligent and his revelations are fascinating — but the task he has set himself is clearly loopy. It's a bit too late to rehabilitate John and Yoko for posterity. The image is just about fixed, and any upsets to Lennon's reputation would probably not stick. The book finally indicates that perhaps even smart Americans consider the Beatles part of their cultural property. Wiener will find worthier books than this to write.

Absolutely bloody essential for the aspiring lighting-camerapersons amongst us, and I'm sure there are a great many, is *A Man with a Camera* by Nestor Almendros (Faber £9.95), a man who will need no introduction to buffs and admirers of the work of François

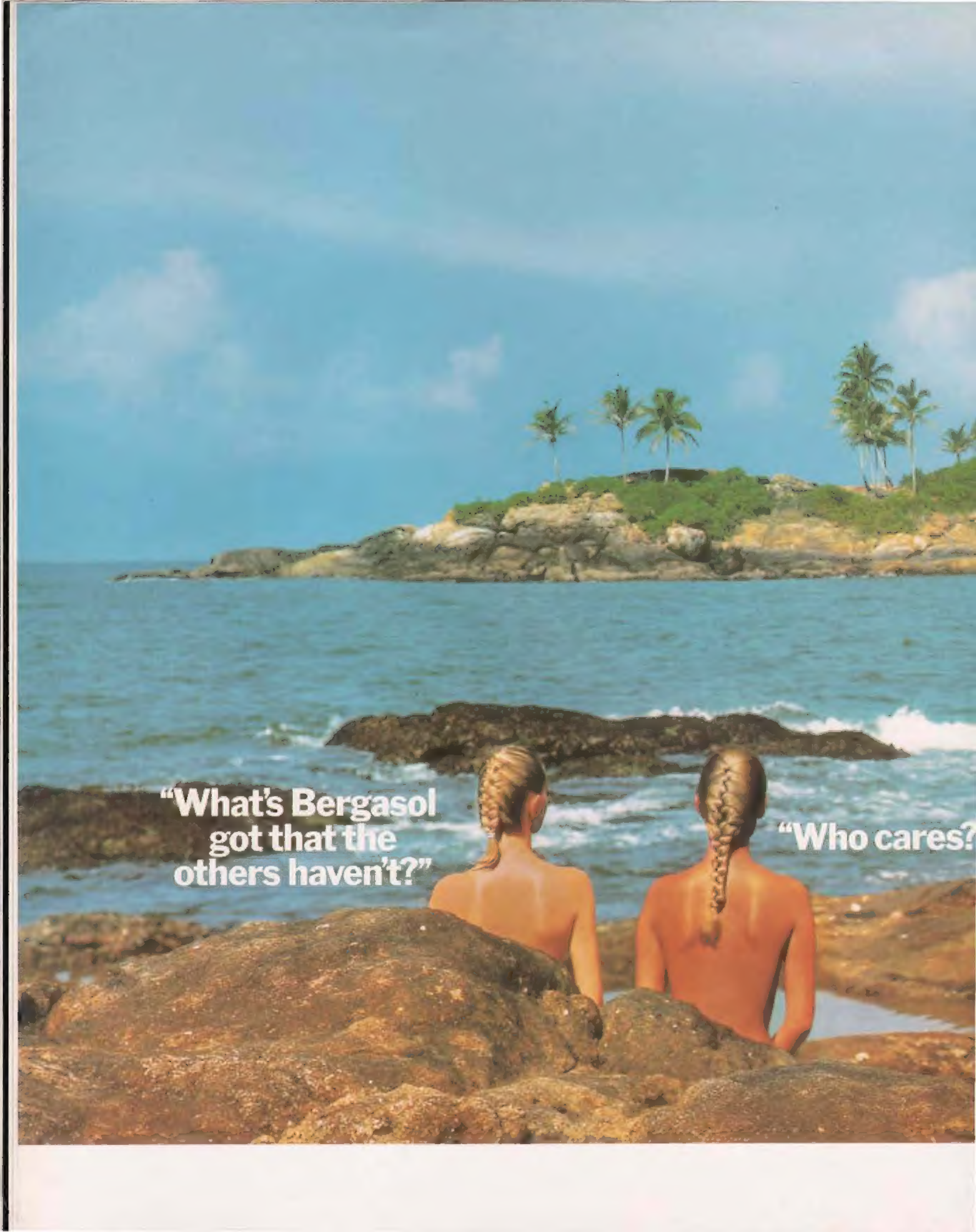
Truffaut or Eric Rohmer, to name but two. Almendros is simply the most famous director of photography that France has produced. This book is a memoir-cum-catalogue of interesting problems solved, and tells how he did what he did. It's rather more technical than most of us would care for, but students of the cinema may well achieve multiple orgasms with the aid of this book...

Hard Lines 2 is the second volume of material — prose and poetry — written by the Great Previously Unpublished (unpublished in book form, at any rate: some names here will be familiar to readers of verse mags and journals such as *Stride*, and of course Attila the Stockbroker is already a star of sorts). The Collection was chosen by Ian Dury, Alan Bleasdale, Pete Townshend and Fanny Dubs. The standard is high. You will almost definitely find something or other that will get you excited, providing you have some enthusiasm for the English Language. I wonder, mostly to myself, what kind of a deal was extended to these writers by the publishers. Perhaps I will write to one of them and find out...

And finally, I am presently almost half way through *The Minimal Self: Psychic Survival in Troubled Times* by Christopher Lasch (Picador £3.50). Contrary to appearances, it is not a new form of therapy, or a quack brain-diet. It seems to be an engaging and rigorous examination of the philosophy of contemporary psychology. You will impress the hell out of the Club 18-30's if you take this to the beach with you, of that you may be sure. It will probably keep your head in shape through the hot days ahead. But then I'm only half way through it, and you never know with this kind of thing when your host will unleash some completely outlandish theory on you, and spoil your whole day. Be careful. I'll let you know what I think of *The Minimal Self* as a whole next ish...



GO GO GO GOLD SEAL

A photograph of a tropical beach scene. In the foreground, two women with blonde hair in braids are seen from behind, sitting on large, dark, wet rocks. They are looking out at a body of blue water. In the middle ground, there are more rocks and waves breaking. In the background, a small, rocky island with green vegetation and several palm trees sits on the horizon under a clear blue sky with a few wispy clouds. The overall mood is serene and tropical.

**"What's Bergasol
got that the
others haven't?"**

"Who cares?"




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J I G

THE BIG APPLE



New York, New York: Hugh Marley talked to Jay McInerney, Stephen Brook and Patrick Blower, three men who've spent the last year examining in print and paint different aspects of the only city in the world that everyone who lives there loves to hate. Photograph of Jay McInerney by David Lines. Photograph of Stephen Brook by Julian Simmonds.

● "It's pronounced 'Mac'n'Ernie,'" explained the press officer, acquainting my nasal passage with the ether of a lunchtime bottle of Chablis '79.....

The man in question, Jay McInerney, has just had his first novel, *Bright Lights, Big City*, published in this country. When he left the States it was going over the counter at the rate of four thousand copies a week and in the six months since publishing he has been inundated with requests for journalism from the likes of New York's Vanity Fair and Esquire magazines. Just prior to the English launch he had been in Hollywood writing a script for a film version of the book.

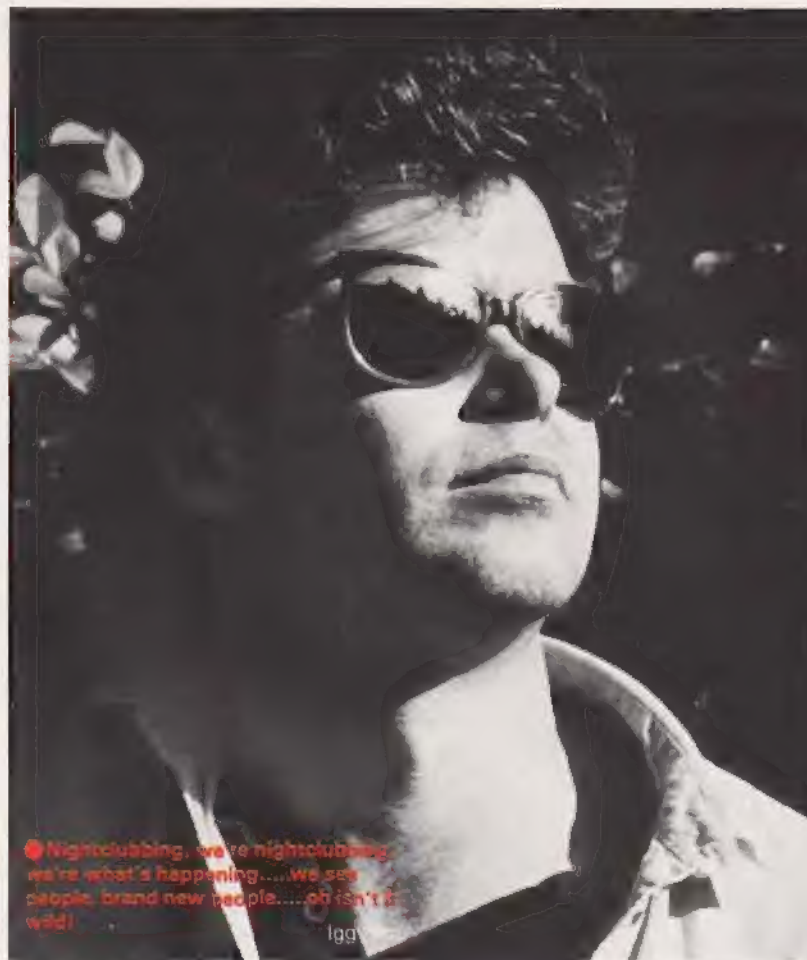
Not bad for a first novel, huh? But doesn't this all get a bit boring? I wonder as he avails himself for yet another photo session. "It's a small price to pay for not having to go to the office everyday," quips McInerney peering into the lens. "Anything to get out of a full-time job!" My sentiments entirely.

The book revolves around a week in the double life of a middle-class uptown New Yorker: by day a minion in

the 'Department of Factual Verification' of a prestigious magazine, a budding writer of course; by night a fainthearted bohemian led rampant through the depths of New York's nightlife chasing the ghost of his departed adulteress wife. A spiralling tale of disaster fuelled by the consumption of copious amounts of cocaine.

While not quite the savage journey to the depths of the soul one might expect — this is not Hunter S. Thompson we're talking about here — the book contains a good deal of wit and perception on New York's obsession with status, style and itself, not least of all in the club scene which forms the background to the plot.

After a slow start it was received with unprecedented enthusiasm, with its author accruing such accolades as 'the new J.D. Salinger', 'writer of the first new wave novel' and 'the Yuppie hero'. 'The preppy prophet of the new pop culture' pronounced The Times and laid the question bare: is this guy the hippest thing to stretch two lines of coke across a mirror and do the New



Jay McInerney

York stroll?

Well not quite, but.....

"I was one of the people who wanted to be cool but I wasn't one of the cool people. I could get in the door but I couldn't get backstage and talk to Debbie Harry or David Byrne...." explains an affable and unexpectedly conservative Jay McInerney, just round the bend from thirty.

Much of the book is autobiographical, he admits, and with a succession of periods spent around the States and

abroad he views New York as something of an outsider. When he first joined the fledgling New York club scene he was a 'part-time punk', moonlighting as a fact-checker at the New Yorker magazine by day.

"Back then it really seemed to me and my friends that there was a scene that was about to come together and we'd all be part of it. Something like Paris in the twenties.... And I thought that if I got into a club and stayed there long enough I'd meet these incredibly

● After two years spent "literally only surviving" in New York, working on anything from kosher deli's to bits of illustration to odd jobs in an art gallery, Patrick Blower fled the precarious life of a 'visa-less' Englishman and returned to this country. Still flushed with mixed feelings about the city, he set to work on a series of paintings setting himself a strict limit of five months in which to finish.

The result was a set of fifteen large-format canvases which, Blower explains, "can be seen either as one long narrative or fifteen autonomous panels."

"The recurring figure of Mickey Mouse is a symbol of America and the series reflects my ambivalence about New York. Some days it's so good you wonder why anyone would want to live anywhere else. And some days it's just too fast, too crazy; all you can think of doing is getting out!

"The image of a masked Mickey Mouse stems from one of my worst experiences in New York. I was delivering to an apartment when the



door opened and a man jumped out with a gun, his features covered with a Mickey Mouse mask. He fired and for a moment I thought I'd really been shot.....but it was a Halloween party.



The image has remained as a means of portraying a number of things, among them as a symbol of violence to replace the need for the more graphic but clumsy images of blood and guts."



Future projects promise to be a little less emotionally charged. He is currently working on a new project based around the cartoon character Tintin.



Stephen Brook

interesting people, or some woman and it would all come together in one night and have something to do with art and being cool and...." McInerney tails off at the absurdity of the idea.

"I think part of being in New York for me was wanting to be on the inside. To be one of those people who knows what's going on instead of someone who's afraid to even ask, whether it's a prestigious magazine, or a nightclub, or a restaurant that's hard to get into.... I mean, New York is all about trying to get into more and more exclusive places."

Ironically, his disillusionment with the values embroiled in the club ethic, the main theme of the book, has been misinterpreted. Among the first people to pick up on it were New York's *Details* magazine, an organ much given to the documentation of the mores and manners of the club scene. "No doubt people are buying it to find out what's hip," admits McInerney sadly.

"I think what *Bright Lights, Big City* is saying is that there isn't a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, it's very illusory. It's like Chinese boxes. If you can get in the club everything will be great. Then you get in and it's not so great. But then if you can get in to the VIP lounge.....And then if you can get into the VIP lounge and snort some coke.....There are more and more boxes but they just open into other boxes; there's really nothing there.

"A lot of what makes New York tick is chasing after this mirage of certain aspects which we call glamour or cool, whether it's drugs or clothes or music or whatever.....and cocaine is the

perfect sort of drug for that because you can never get enough, and it's fantastically expensive which adds to the status. I sometimes wonder if, after trying it once, people would pay \$125 for a gramme of cocaine if someone hadn't told them it was cool!"

"You are experiencing the inevitable disappointment of clubs," explains the book. "You enter with an anticipation that on past experience is totally unjustified. You always seem to forget that you don't like to dance,..."

● Anyone who has ever wondered where your average roving journalist keeps his notebook whilst on assignment in a Turkish bath might be interested in a remarkable brace of books just out by Stephen Brook. *New York Days, New York Nights* and *Honky Tonk Gelato: Travels in Texas* are remarkable because, with a prose style the author describes as "freewheeling" and an approach conceived as "throwing myself at the city", Brook has succeeded (most notably with the former) in producing that rarity among rarities: the travel book which is just as interesting at home in an armchair.

New York Days, New York Nights is an unusually penetrating and honest account of a city most noted for its deception. No accident, explains Brook, who set out to provide just exactly that. "It was all very improvised and unstructured when I researched it but I wanted to try and convey what it was actually like to be in the place and participate. To try and become a New

Yorker while I was there."

An impossible task of course in two and a half months, but to this end he walked, talked and experienced the lot of your average New Yorker up and down the social strata. From the rarefied atmosphere of the Metropolitan Opera or an art opening to the urban decay of Harlem and the South Bronx, from the claustrophobic confines of the Riker's Island Prison to the civic offices of Mayor Ed Koch, Brook interviews those involved and documents, dissects and debunks the absurd, and often grotesque, realities of New York.

The essential feature of the book however is a fearsome disregard for popular myths and a willingness to take on anything from politics to the gay baths of Manhattan to a day with the cops, and even a sweaty Lower West side S&M club, in pursuit of a true portrait of the city.

In person, Stephen Brook is, surprisingly, almost completely the opposite of the fastriding troubleshooter you might expect from these exploits. A small quiet man heading for his forties, he carries a pleasant air about him and admits the secret of his technique is in his "obsessive notetaking".

Previously a book editor virtually untouched by journalism he concedes he has a penchant for the unusual, even vaguely dangerous.

"If people tell me I shouldn't go to a place, my immediate reaction is to want to go there. When I was seventeen I went down to the Deep South of Mississippi, which was a

fairly foolish thing for a long-haired white man to do. It was right in the middle of the Civil Rights trouble and three people had been murdered the year before. But that was somehow where the action was and I had to take a look!"

Inevitably, as a subject less endemically interesting than New York, *Honky Tonk Gelato*, Brook's book on Texas, carries fewer surprises though it retains the ability to scratch below the surface into the turbulent history of the state.

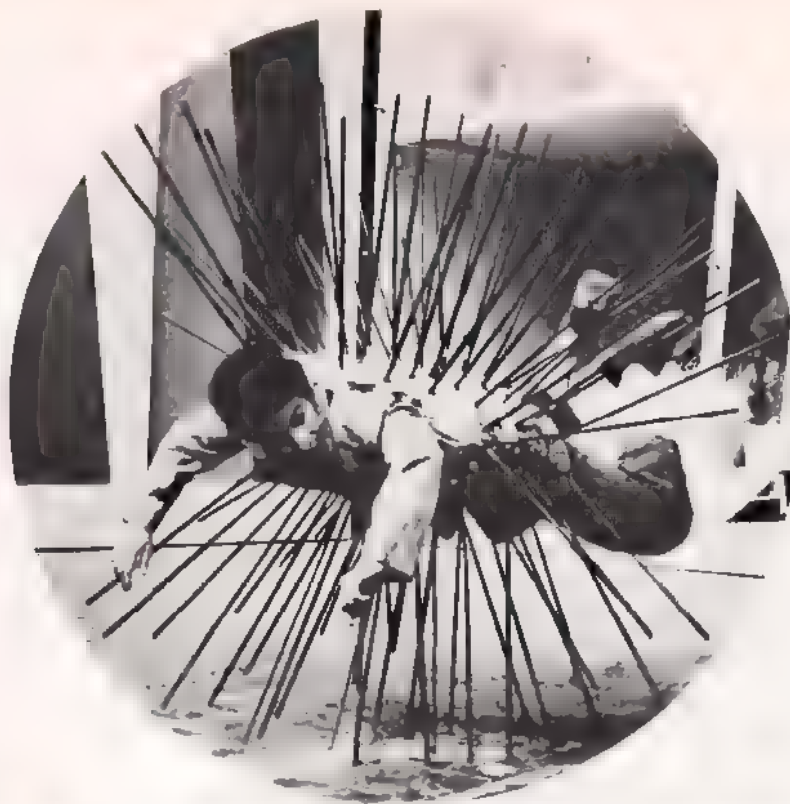
"I found that all the stereotypes were true," remarks Brook. "There's an incredibly wide racial mix of Blacks, Mexicans, Germans, WASP's and so on there. Somewhere like Houston is so fantastically rich that people come to live there from all over the world, so it has an incredibly cosmopolitan intellectual life."

And what of J.R. and Sue Ellen?

"The Texans have a fair degree of contempt for *Dallas*. It's actually quite a tame version compared to the real thing," he explains. "I was more interested in the way people acted with this enormous wealth, rather than worry about what they did to acquire it. I assume that successful businessmen are much the same all over the world; that Clint Murchison is no worse than Robert Maxwell. If your aim in life is to become extremely rich then you're going to use certain methods, and that's no different in Texas!"

And if anyone's still wondering where he keeps his notebook.....he doesn't!

LA GAIA SCIENZA



●Who would have thought that a man dressed as a porcupine, a couple of señoritas wrapped in bacofoil and a bloke who gradually inflates in front of your very eyes, until he reaches the proportions of The Michelin Man, could cause such a sensation?

It could be because Italy doesn't have a practical equivalent to Britain's style-conscious music culture that La Gaia Scienza is such a big hit there — for a theatre group that is — so much so that they are treated as pop stars of the first water wherever they appear.

It's more likely however that the stylish young Italian still has the same blood coursing through his veins which made The Renaissance a success. If nothing else, a show by the members of Italy's latest theatrical tutti frutti is colourful and thought-provoking, and also totally bewildering.

They certainly impressed Lucy Neal when she saw them at the Teatro Sperimentale festival in Ancona in January this year. One of the pioneers of the London International Theatre Festival, she can spot a winner when she sees one. That's why La Gaia Scienza are appearing at London's Shaw Theatre later this month as part of the festival.

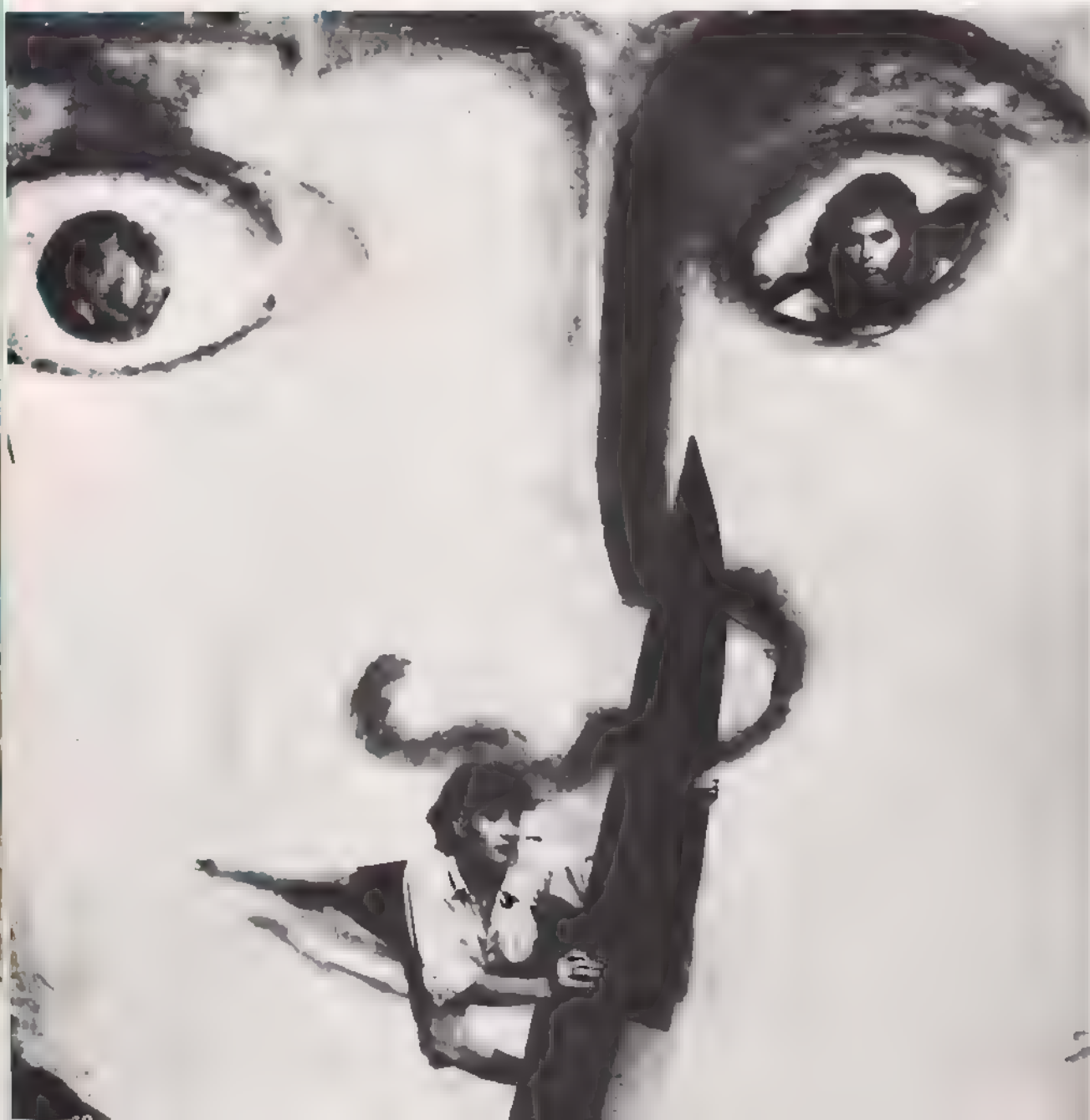
The show, *Thief of Souls*, is an extended zoom-in on the interior of an imaginary Mediterranean seaside town and the action selects at random characters and faces from the crowd, the facades of buildings, and the interior of one house which is populated by thoughts.

The use of props is conventional up to a point, and then leaps into the bizarre. *Thief Of Souls* starts with actors camouflaged against a Cezanne backdrop. As the music starts, walls and roofs begin to move to reveal bodies who slink across the stage; the town literally begins to live. Later a huge cutaway house appears, complete with stairs, rubber furniture, and a room which seems to be filled with chalk.

There are certain flourishes to the design which wouldn't look out of place in a West End farce: the trap-door in the floor of one of the rooms, for example, through which the actors spy on each other. Even furniture seems to have a life of its own — a girl reaches into a chest of drawers in search of her underwear and is met by a man's hand in an image which would thrill Dali or Polanski. In one brilliant sequence, almost a living representation of a Chagall canvas, a character dressed in a bright green jacket, carrying a blue fish, walks upside down across the ceiling...

It won't do you any good at all to try to work out what's going on during a performance by La Gaia Scienza. The best course is to give your disbelief a holiday and sit back and enjoy it.

Anton Rush



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the artist has released seven albums in the u.s. with a multitude of very impressive musicians known as 'fusion' he's also worked with the commodores, barbara streisand, eddie murphy and dabarge he has recently arranged produced and performed the title for the new hollywood wives t.v. series. never complacent, always changing.

the album previously available as a very hot, very expensive import. now available to the u.k. a decent price. includes the club hit 'step by step' and features the vocals of gavin christopher, audrey wheeler and james robinson produced by david frank and mic murphy (known as 'the system').

the single a brand new u.k. remix of the song 'best part of the night' featuring gavin christopher a great uptempo club demanded track. great value package includes long versions of 'step by step' the previous import.

o u t n o w ! o u t j u n e 1 4 t h



soon to be fully touring the u.k. jeff will be here this month to promote his current releases on t.v., radio and in the press and clubs.



available on l.p., chrome cassette and compact disc. catalogue numbers: l.p. (jabh 9) m.c. (jabhc 9) c.d. (coming soon).



available on 7" and as an extended 12" with instrumental versions and the complete extended versions of 'step by step'. catalogue numbers: 7" (jab 13) 12" (jabx 13).



READY
STEADY
GO



●Remember when all that Friday evening TV meant was Leslie Crowther and a couple of *Crackerjack* pencils? Then came Paula and Jools in Wacky Fun Beneath The Scaffolding and now Friday night has become an obligatory object lesson in pop programming. *Soul Train*, *The Tube*'s summer replacement won itself an average of one million viewers a week, equivalent to its predecessor's peak. A lesson well learned?

Well of course *Soul Train* isn't born out of *The Tube*. To look for its roots we have to go much further back, to the granddaddy of them all, that bit of sixties hooch called *Ready Steady Go*, currently getting a rescreening from Channel Four.

It was *RSG* that was responsible during its run from 1963 to 1967 for establishing the form and dynamics of all good pop programmes since, and has acted as the 'inspiration' for a great many flops as well.

Rather like the satirical *That Was The Week That Was*, *Ready Steady Go* has entered cultural mythology as the pop programme all else should aspire to. For once the myth matches up to reality, it IS that good. It naturally has its faults: can the, um, 'erratic' camera angles be consistently cheered as welcome naivety? Can pop ever retain its tingling

vigour when transferred to a two foot box? *RSG* is, however, the closest you'll ever get to the perfect pop show.

The man behind the salvaging of the shows is Dave Clark, who, as leader of The Dave Clark Five (remember *Glad All Over*?) was an *RSG* regular and who, realising the importance of the programmes, bought all rights to them off Rediffusion.

Talking to him in his Mayfair penthouse, the inevitable question is, why the twenty year delay?

"Well one of the things I wanted to make sure of when I bought the series was that they weren't going to be used

as a cash-in. I wanted to wait until a decent time had elapsed before showing them. There's people watching them now who wouldn't even have been born when the originals were on and it'll be nice for them to see it. It would have been so easy to give in years ago and sell clips to documentary programmes and things."

The series' real strength comes from its lack of reverence, pop as rough diamond rather than polished excrement. But could the air of offhand disregard from the audience be authentic?

"It looks as if the audience don't feel

at all affected by all the stars around them, but in fact it was only because London County Council had threatened to close down the show if there was any screaming or anything. Outside the studios there were hordes of screaming girls!"

Ready Steady Go, whether or not by intent, ended at the right time. It couldn't have showcased a Queen or an ELP; sophistication would have strangled it, just as the ridiculous high tech touch of Mike Mansfield et al has demonstrated on most pop shows since.

"That's one of the good things to have come out of new wave, a return to a more simple pop music. It was always obvious from the great music that was on *RSG* that classic pop is all about what's left off the record not what's squeezed on."

Over the next couple of months you'll all have your favourite *RSG* moments. Mine are Billy Fury's *Nothing Shakin'* and anything involving Dusty Springfield but there could be a thousand more. What are Dave Clark's?

"Oh, it's impossible to say just one. Perhaps the live show Otis Redding did. That was incredible."

There's only seven shows scheduled so far. It's up to you to scream for more.

Paul Mathur

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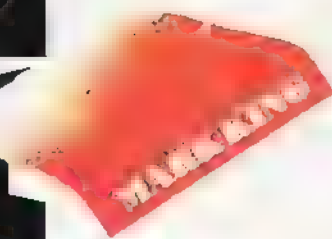
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● Interview by Mark Cordery

● Illustration by Julian Simmonds & Peter Morgan/B2

THE ESSENTIAL



MARK KING is a muso. No, he is, he admits it. I mean, he made a solo LP called *Influences*, ferchrissake. Side One consists of a piece, split into several sections admittedly, called *The Essential*. It features the most outrageously, extravagantly fast bass-playing I've ever heard. And it isn't done by mucking about with the tape speed. It's almost unbelievable. It has me in stitches every time.

"You find it funny?" The beefy bassist raises an eyebrow. "Funny, Phil (Gould, Level 42 drummer) laughs at it, too. It wasn't meant to be funny. It was there for no other reason than, 'I'm Mark King greatest-bass-player-in-the-world and here I go!'"

WHEN YOU, whoever you are, go to see Level 42 you know that there will be some stiff bits. You never liked jazz-funk, still less jazz-rock, did you? Flares may flap on Merseyside terraces as a scally anti-fashion riposte to the Tacchini-Armani-Fiorucci-Pringle-Lacoste mobs down south. But a revival for The Mahavishnu Orchestra? Gentle Giant? Focus? Never. I'll stake my back copies of BLITZ on it.

Then again, when you go to see Level 42, you know that there'll be some impeccable grooves. Delirious, musicianly energy. Level 42: Mark, Phil, his brother Boon — so called because at his birth a relative observed that he'd be a real boon to the family — and Mike Lindup have, on occasion, produced what Paul Morley, an early admirer of the group, called a "clear, coasting dance music". When they are good — *Love Games*, *Mr. Pink*, *Micro Kid*, *Sun Goes Down (Living It Up)*, *Hot Water* — they are sublime. Often though, they are ridiculous — *Eyes Waterfalling*, *Foundation And Empire* — probably because Mark King likes *Hall Of The Mountain King* by a Dutch group called 'Focus'.

When he was growing up on the Isle Of Wight he was into Cream — Jack Bruce, Eric Clapton, Ginger Baker. Virtuousos one and all. Miles Davis' *Bitch's Brew*. Stanley Clarke, Billy Cobham, John McLaughlin, *The Mahavishnu Orchestra*. (Still is, as a matter of fact.) Indeed the young Mark King — a handy young boxer, as it happens — went so far as to crop his hair and wear white suits in the manner of his guitar-hero, John McLaughlin.

"Cricket whites, actually. That's all I could get. Very dodgy. Everyone else was mods and rockers."

No time for Youth Culture, you see, even at that age. No chance of being a pop star, really.

Even though McLaughlin shattered the young aesthete's illusions by turning up for a show wearing, like, *proper clothes*, and swigging from a bottle of champagne, it didn't put him off the music (which is, in the opinion of many respected critics, not least myself, a technically accomplished but tuneless racket). So what is the appeal of these show-offs?

"The sense of power. And in those days I was very much into music being executed properly, the standard of musicianship. And the speed at which McLaughlin could play used to make my hair stand on end."

Aha!

"Yeah, nothing more than that. Like my car. I've only got a poxy Range Rover, but I'm having so much work done on the engine to make it go faster than any other Range Rover... because of the *exhilaration* of doing it."

It's certainly true that Mark King holds the world land speed record for bass-playing. But the thing ▶





calibre of Miles Davis are going to him, or getting Sting to come in and recite a bit on his latest record just because he wants a hit... that's horrible."

AN ANECDOTE, related by way of a cheap shot at character insight: "Los Angeles? Horrible. I spent a night in jail there as well, which finished the place for me. What for? 'Exhibitionist driving'. Exhibitionist driving includes a little alcohol along the way. And it wasn't only alcohol, either. High-octane gear. Very dangerous place LA, I think, the excesses of it. The EW&F set-up was just frightening. Seriously frightening. You just get absolutely screaming out of your head, and then Polydor had laid on a couple of Mercury Capris for us..."

How did you get back to Earth?

"Well, I think I'm probably tight-fisted somewhere along the way, it frightens me how much I could spend on the stuff. And I've got a wife and two kids."

PERSONABLE though they are in person, as it were, Level 42 have remained incorrigibly faceless in market terms. Still, they have a hard-core following that wouldn't want it any other way, and Mark, while not a millionaire, is "comfortable". But the really sad thing is that Mark King has turned into a guitar hero. He'll say so.

"I've turned into a guitar hero. I fulfil the same things for other people that my guitar heroes did for me."

It is disconcerting. Quietly now, "particularly when it's so easy. I think, 'shit, they gotta be kidding!'"

And this guy, this muso, hardly ever listens to music anymore.

"It's more important than it was because it's my livelihood, and there's wives and kids riding on it. It's more important than it was, but it's not as exciting as it was. The thrill of creating is still here, writing songs is good fun, but it's only my own music, I don't listen to anyone else's. It's ironic really, I get asked by the BBC to do various things quite often, because I'm the man who knows what's happening in the soul business. I haven't got a clue I was on Whistle Test one night to do a quick appraisal of the charts, and I hadn't heard of any of the fuckers."

A TV pundit's career collapses. But grieve not, for multi-media celebrity was never really an option for Level 42, charming, quick and good-humoured though Mark King is. On second thoughts, that's probably exactly why multi-media celebrity was never really on for Mark King. That, and the videos.

"Our videos are useless, they're fuckin' useless. I know they're useless. Not for want of budget, or good directors, it's just that the only way we look any good on video is if we're actually playing. What you see is what you get, and that's what you hear, and that's it. We're not saying anything else."

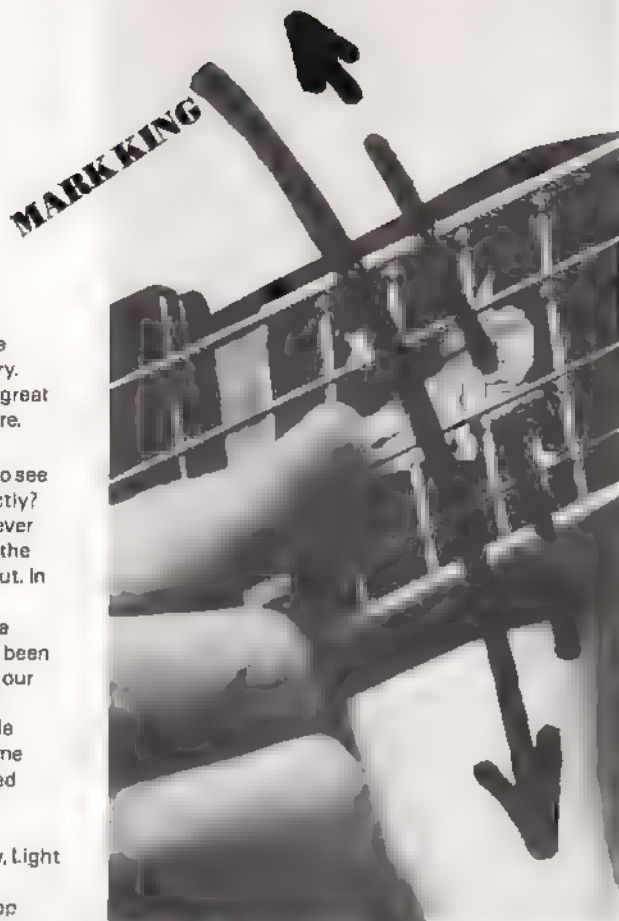
Same with PA's, usually a crucial tool in the soul/funk trade.

"We did about three PA's at the beginning, Caister and all that, and it was just horrible. I can't stand around and lord it up with my fantastic charisma, because I haven't got any. But when I've got a bass strapped on, and plugged in, then I can say what I can say."

Is there anything more to say? Five years, five LP's, another one on the way, and right now a double-live one. The record that Mark King is happiest with. Take another five?

"This could be the end of the road, actually. Yeah... basically, the chemistry of the four of us doing this has run its course, more or less. Funnily enough, when we started out we said 'five years'. And it's working out that way. I'm not saying anymore, this is all speculation. I shall deny the splitting-up bit."

Not exactly hold-the-front-page news, but there you have it. According to *The Hitch-Hikers Guide To The Galaxy* (what else?), it is on Level 42 that The Meaning Of Life is to be found. The name was taken in jest, of course. But Level 42: bright early promise, terrific energy, peculiar indulgences, slipped opportunities, a mass of contradictions, some great moments... How true.



about high-velocity — apart from the adrenalin-pumping thrill of it all — is that one need not care where one is going, nor even observe the scenery. Sometimes Level 42 sound like they're having a great time, but they don't know where on Earth they are.

ACTUALLY, you never considered going to see Level 42, did you? I mean, who did, exactly? Hard to say. But lots of people did, whoever they were. Level 42 shows, here and on the mainland of Europe, were always sold out. In advance.

"It's something I'm really proud of. We've got a fantastic following. There's guys I know who've been to see us 37 times. The press have always given our crowd a lot of stick, because they can't actually pinpoint any trend that's happening there. People come along for different reasons. Musicians come along, or kids or whatever, but they all get lumped together as Cortina drivers. Which is, like, ha ha, tacky."

Right. Anyone remember Brit-funk? You know, Light Of The World, Central Line, Linn, Beggar & Co. Spandau Ballet? Cast your eyes down today's Top Fifty, or next week's, and you'll notice that at least 50% of them list funk as a main ingredient. It's everywhere, isn't it? Chart hits, TV ads, cop-show soundtracks. Even *I Could Be So Good For You*... Cool grooves, electro mash-downs, basses popping and snapping all over the place.

But it wasn't always like that, not in the mainstream of things at any rate. After punk had puked its last and 'new wave', or 'power pop', had squeezed its way into tight pants and the nascent MTV mentality, there was... Brit-funk! Take it away, Mark...

"I can honestly say that the whole thing changed after our first Top Of The Pops appearance, which was *Love Games*, back at the beginning of '81. Guys had slapped before, like Louis Johnson of The Johnson Brothers, but that was very much a club scene, it wasn't Top Ten. Larry Graham was the first (on Sly Stone's *There's A Riot Goin' On*) but he very much played it down — which he's not doing anymore because it's a lot more profitable to play it up..."

Indeed it was. And furthermore...

"A lot of it had to do with a fairly vile aspect... racially. I was probably the first white guy to be seen doing it."

Hard to believe, I know, but it's true. Mark King did it. Slapped his bass with his thumb. And moreover he started out doing it that way. In point of fact he initially wanted to be a drummer, and became one, which is obvious when you hear the way he assaults his bass guitar. He got a reputation for being a bit of a nutter, a sore thumb, blood all over the strings. *Blistering* bass-playing, literally. Yet a palpable sense of the fun to be had from the mastery of one's craft was conveyed in this most muscular of playing. Tough, to be sure, but Level 42 could float, too.

But alas, the hideous Shakatak had the biggest hits, although Level 42 did OK. *Love Games* went Top 40, as did *Are You Hearing (What I Hear)* and *The Chinese Way*. Their LP's tended to hang around the charts all summer, like beach bums. They did OK. And they were massive in Europe. They appeared at the Montreux Jazz Festival. But before that they went to Los Angeles to record an LP with Larry Dunn and Verdine White, from the one-and-only Earth, Wind & Fire. How hip could they get? Too hip, it seems.

"Working with them was very enjoyable, but we just

didn't learn as much as we could have done, for the simple reason that at the time there was this British Wave sweeping across America. And Americans, because they're so formulaised, thought that because we were Europeans that we had that Euro-sound, like 'these guys know what's happenin'. And we went out there to learn from them."

Nevertheless, they brought back their first UK Top Ten single, *Sun Goes Down (Living It Up)*. At last. A big Pop Hit. A typical Neville Brody sleeve, moody Sheila Rock photos, an EW&F Production, Serious Rock Critics admitting that, yes, they were seduced by some of this bland shit after all. So it was all happening then! Well no, not quite, not really. Certainly not in America. Not rocky enough for the Rock stations. R&B? "Well, it certainly sounds black, but you guys ain't!"

Of course, things have changed a bit since. Prince. Michael Jackson. Madonna. Lionel Richie. Kenny Rogers? Now I'm not in favour of purity in any respect, certainly not when it comes to music. But when creeping homogeneity is the price to pay for commercial parity? I don't know. Mark King does though, and he is irked.

"Miles Davis is having a new LP produced by Bill Laswell. Miles Davis is like The Godfather to modern musicians. I'm talking about modern musicians, not modern... Posers? Yes. Now Miles Davis, who has been breaking barriers for 40 years, has to get Bill Laswell to produce an LP because he wants to make money, he wants to have the same success that Herbie Hancock (a teenage pianist for Miles in the early '70's) had with *Rockit*. Herbie Hancock has been the luckiest of the lot, he's managed to use different aspects of his personality in his music, but Stanley Clarke, *George Benson*... (breaks off in disbelief). They're looking for that stinking American formula that permeates their music at the moment."

Mark King pulls a face like... well, imagine discovering pigeon shit on your favourite shirt. Sadness and disgust, and why, oh why?

"Bill Laswell is a very clever guy, make no mistake about that, but what I find exasperating is that great guys rush to him because they think he's got the golden key to what's happening. When guys of the

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BILLY IDOL was born William Broad in Stanmore, Middlesex, on November 30th, 1955. At eighteen, he went to Sussex University, where he lasted one year of an English course. At twenty, he was part of the 'Bromley Contingent' who were the shock troops of what was later seen as the Punk Rock Explosion. He formed Generation X with Tony James and in 1978 their first album was released. At the bottom of the list of credits on the back of the sleeve it said 'NO SESSION

MUSICIANS'. On the front of the sleeve was a photograph by Gered Mankowitz which proved that Generation X were by far the prettiest punks around. They had a few hit singles, they appeared on Top Of The Pops, the backlash quickly followed. Generation X became Gen X. By the time they reached the third album it was obvious that the cause was lost. Billy Idol set out for New York. He got himself signed up to the same management company that handles Kiss and began a solo career. Through a combination

of backbreaking tours and a realisation of the power of MTV, he got himself back in the race. His second solo album, *Rebel Yell*, is now double platinum. As he told me himself, Billy Idol is big in America, big in Germany, big in Italy, big in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Hong Kong, in fact big just about everywhere apart from Britain. In September he's coming over personally to show us where we've been going wrong. The NME boys are probably sharpening the knives at this very minute.



Sweet WILLIAM

● Interview by Tim Hulse ● Photographs by Richard Croft

"Look, Billy," I said. "I wrote my questions on an aeroplane sick bag."

"That's appropriate," he said, and laughed. "I write songs on things like that."

That's appropriate, I thought, and smiled.

We did the pictures first. Billy was really wired and it was hard to get him to stay still. It was practically impossible to make him stop talking. He speaks with a gruff London accent and he was slurring his words quite a lot. Like I said, he was really wired. Sometimes he was talking to us, but most of the time he was just talking. He was ranting. It was hugely entertaining. Later, during the interview, he began perspiring heavily, although the room was quite cool and the rain was pouring down outside. He couldn't stay still in his seat. He'd put his feet on the table in front of him, then take them down again, keep changing position on the sofa. When I listened to the tape afterwards it was full of clunks and jangles as he writhed around.

"Everyone's got such a false idea about America. And New York's not even America anyway, Jesus Christ, it's Brixton or something. I love London and I love New York and they're the only two places I'll ever live. I won't live in London because of the police. The SPG. You walk down the street and they're on you like a ton of bricks. I got off the bus once and they stopped me. They searched me. You're ten times more likely to get clapped in England than you are in America. We went on tour here for nine and a half months and I didn't get it once. You go on tour in England for ten days and you get it twice. I'm not an ex-patriot, 'cos I was never a patriot. I can't wait to play there. Even if it's Liverpool Eric's, the old beer and sick, I'm coming to play there. I don't give a shit. I'll get up at the old Hope & Anchor. I did before, I'll do it again. It's my cousin's wedding on Saturday and they've got a band, so I'll get up and sing *White Wedding*. I got up with the Holiday Inn band at Asbury, New Jersey. I don't give a fuck. Come to the show, folks. You don't need that much money. Come

and see a rock'n'roll outfit. You haven't seen a rock'n'roll outfit. Well, U2 say they are. They are, actually, I suppose. They say they are, that's what I like, thank God they're not frightened to say it. I *did* drop my pants in a restaurant. These girls were saying something, so I said, 'OK, here you are, come on!' Then this guy came up and he reckoned I stood there saying, 'I'm a bigshot, I'm from England.' I mean, come on. If you're from England, you just say, 'I'm English'. You don't bother with the 'bigshot', do you? English people are like that. They say, 'I'm from England.' Anybody who's English would know that I couldn't have said that. The Americans probably wouldn't know."

Billy calls his music rock'n'roll. A more exact description would be 'Eighties Disco Rock'. He has valuable allies in the shape of guitarist Steve Stevens and more especially producer Keith Forsey, who is the Trevor Horn of the USA. Maybe the comparison is appropriate — when you think about it, the dividing line between Billy Idol and Frankie Goes To Hollywood is a lot thinner than most people would like to believe. The Frankies have a better dress sense. Billy is the winner in the rebellion stakes.

Do you take your image seriously?

"No, I take my personality and person seriously. Image? I take *myself* seriously. My image is other people's perception of me. It's not mine. I don't think of an image."

But you have one. What is the image of Billy Idol?

"He's fun and he means it."

How do you stop Billy Idol sneering when he's having his picture taken? This was the question that had vexed Richard Croft during the flight to New York. I'd shown him all the pictures I had and Billy was looking 'mean' in every one. When Billy walked into the room, exactly two hours and forty minutes late, he was . . . sneering. As soon as he'd sat down in front of the camera, there it was again. That and a clenched fist. Eventually we got him to smile a couple of times. He thought it was a great joke and

said something about "Duran Duran pictures". We told him he had a nice smile. He said he thought the sneer "looks good". Later, he asked Richard to take a picture of him with his mother, and he got her to clench her fist just like him. "Rebel Yell. That's the one, isn't it, dear?" she said.

What would you do if people tried to put pressure on you to change your image?

"I'd say fuck off, spray my hair doubly spiky and do my sneer even more. I have fun while I do things. It's *fun*, rock'n'roll! Half of these other people are in show business. I think showbusiness is very boring. It's not a joke at all. What's exciting, really, about Ronnie Corbett? What *really* is fucking exciting about that *twat* on Breakfast TV, that Scottish queen or whatever he is, I mean, God, he drives me up the wall. That's showbusiness, it's boring. Rock'n'roll's exciting. What can you say? At least I say something. At least I don't just *whimper*. I don't give a shit about posing. Posing? Fuck that. I don't pose. I'm like this naturally. I'm like this and I don't care. I don't have to do anything for anybody. It's me."

Do you mean you're a natural poser?

"No. I'm naturally *me*!"

His heroes are either predictable or dumb — Brando, Dean, Stamp, Morrison, Wagner, Liszt, Burton "and Jesus Christ, he was pretty good. He was a bit of a laugh, a bit of a revolutionary. Judas was a bit wild, too, wasn't he?" Above all the rest, there's Elvis.

"I'd love to end up like Elvis. Of course. To be the king of rock'n'roll? Fantastic. I think people love having a stereotype and saying how awful, poor old Elvis and no one quite likes to think that the real reason he ended up like he did was the lack of people who really cared about this nice guy. How the fuck can he help it if he gets fat? I'm *proud* of Elvis Presley. I'm proud that the bastard bothered to keep singing when he had to take all those drugs to deal with some of the scum people around him who"



were just parasites. Imagine the guy standing there looking at thirty to fifty people he's keeping alive who are all looking at him thinking 'You've gotta keep working to pay us.'"

Billy's mother is a very well-spoken and utterly charming lady. She calls Billy William, or Will, and talks about Billy Idol as if he were someone totally different. Of course he is. The only magazine she reads is the Sunday Telegraph supplement "and Rolling Stone when Billy Idol's on the cover." She told us she lives in Bromley, Kent. "The Bromley Contingent," she said, and laughed. Billy is intensely fond of her and tends to act like a little boy in her presence. His mother was only over in New York for a week. I told Billy I hoped he'd tidied his flat. "Oh no, of course not, I made it extra dirty. I'll have to get her to go round there . . ."

"Here's some pictures of me in magazines. Look."

"Oh, that's a great picture, that one."

"Do you like that, mum?"

"It's great, isn't it? It's lovely."

In the flesh, Billy doesn't look anything like Kim Wilde. His face is a lot thinner and a lot more drawn than most of his pictures would have you believe. There's not a trace of pink or brown in his complexion. He still dresses very much The Punk, all in black with God knows how many belts, buckles and rings. And he doesn't so much walk as stalk – head bent forward, arms held out slightly from the sides completely immobile, fists clenched. Look at any self-respecting punk and he'll have that same stalk.

"I've got a punk rock attitude. Punk rock was never a style of music, it was an attitude. I always thought it was being yourself, doing exactly what you wanted, whenever you wanted, for the right reasons, making music you want, you like, and you only do the music under your own terms, for your own reasons, and it's gotta be your music, it's gotta be your ideas, it's gotta be your inspiration, you can't be doing it for money, you've gotta be doing everything because you like it. And that's what the punk rock attitude is – you've gotta be really willing to tell the truth and tell people to get screwed."

Billy was never a football hooligan. When he was seven he used to send Spurs pictures to his cousin Dave in exchange for pictures of The Beatles. He used to think Jimmy Greaves was fantastic and remembers Eusebio, George Best and Bobby Charlton. He reckons football stopped being exciting after England won the World Cup in 1966. "Now you just see a lot of haircuts."

"I don't really like sport. I don't watch sport. I like Kung Fu, which is a mind, body and spirit sport. It's a defence sport, it's a way of defending yourself against the morons."

Do you often have to do that?

"Well everybody does, I think."

Billy Idol is twenty-nine.

Do you think you'll reach an age when you'll have to pack all this in?

"I'll carry on singing and playing the guitar."

In the same way?

"Yeah. Yeah. Rock'n'roll's for ever. I don't know why these people say you *can't* do it for ever. I think that's silly. They're talking about it like it's a thing at school."

Isn't it connected with youth?

"No. What about old men of sixty singing the blues?"

But they're not dressing up and jumping around on stage.

"No, but James Brown does."

He doesn't look too good doing it, though.

"He's not bad. I don't know what you expect."

People get old. Personally I really admire those people continuing. I'm gonna do it just to fuck 'em, you know?"

Do you ever worry about losing your looks?

" . . . No. I'm sorry."

I don't believe you.

"Well, I've been doing this for fuck knows how many years. I gave up eating meat when I was eighteen and Gene October said to me, 'In ten years' time you'll look shit.' It's ten years later."

What if you suddenly started to go bald?

"I'd get a good wig."

A spiky one?

"Yeah, a really good one! But I'm *not* going bald, that's the point. Why worry about that shit? I've been dyeing my hair for years – why should I worry about it?"

Would you like to have children?

"Yeah. I already could have had two. One would be ten years old and the other would be about five, I think. Yeah, I'd like to have kids one day. I've just gotta work now so I can be with them. I don't want to be the sort of dad where the mother's always saying, 'Wait till your father comes home', 'cos in my case it'd be about six months before I come home. They'd have good fun, I think, with me. I mean, fancy me being a dad, eh? What a laugh. I'd be saying, 'Ere, do you want a joint or something?' or 'Ere, listen to this record. 'Ere, there's a good TV programme at 11-30, you can stay up to watch that.'"

Your kids might have real problems trying to rebel. They'd probably start wearing suits just to annoy you.

"Yeah!"

Would you get married?

"No. Only to legitimize the kids."

Are you romantic?

"Yeah, very romantic. I love women. I always talk to women. I'm Sagittarian. I like giving women nice things."

Do you buy flowers?

"Yeah, I've started doing that sort of stuff, I've learnt that's a good one, you know? They love flowers. Flowers get you fucking everywhere. Women are very complicated, I realise. You've gotta remember they're women."

Do you prefer women to men?

"Oh yeah."

As people, I mean.

"I like both men and women. I'm definitely a man's man, but I love women."

Do you think you're a bit of a lad?

"Oh, definitely. Well I've put myself in a good position to be one."

Some of you (Lots of you? All of you?) may be thinking that Billy Idol is a jerk. Well if that's the case, I feel I must tell you that he thinks you're jerks too. I don't think Billy Idol is a jerk, well not a complete jerk at any rate. I'd like to think that he has some idea of self-parody about what he does. Certainly he's worked hard to get where he is today and for that alone he believes he deserves a little respect. He's probably right. And he loves his mother, so he can't be all bad.

Can he?

first came to prominence in *Rumblefish*, a film directed by his uncle, Francis Coppola. More recently he has played the manic brother of Richard Gere in another Coppola film, *The Cotton Club*. His latest role is that of Al Columbato in Alan Parker's *Birdy*

● Interview by Judy Lipsey

● Photograph by Mark Bayley.

TO WHAT lengths does an actor go these days in pursuit of excellence and realism on screen? Nicolas Cage, tall, tanned and vaguely handsome, scared of heights and not too crazy about birds, has made a brief stop-off in London on his way to the almighty Cannes Film Festival, blazing the promotional trail of Alan Parker's latest drama, *Birdy* (which subsequently won the Grand Jury Prize at Cannes). Perched, dare I say, on a chair in one of the capital's less faceless hotels, Cage is swathed in a hefty black leather jacket, heftier boots, a tasteful shirt and, goodness me, blue cords as opposed to the All-American uniform of denim jeans. When he smiles, the light glints on the wire bridging the gaps where he had two teeth pulled for the role. I'm impressed.

In *Birdy*, Cage is Al Columbato, a confident, swaggering youth who befriends a lonely, sensitive boy nicknamed 'Birdy' because of his obsession with flying. Separated by the Vietnam war, and devastated by their personal experiences, they are finally reunited after Birdy withdraws into a catatonic trance, and Al, half his face blown away during the war and covered in bandages, is called upon to establish the cause of his breakdown.

"There were some things about Al I could relate to and some things that I couldn't," says Cage, "and I could not relate to having half my face blown off. I couldn't even imagine it, really, and imagination is the most important tool of an actor, so I knew I had some work cut out for me to make it believable." He took the decision to wear the bandages day and night, "to inundate myself with the circumstances of the character. Consistently doing that just made it somewhat more believable for me and by the time Alan said action, I would forget about everything and it would become instinctive."

Cage has been acting for as long as he can remember. Born Nicolas Coppola (Uncle Francis is the very same who rose with *The Godfather* and fell with *The Cotton Club*), he grew up with his two older brothers in the sunny surroundings of Long Beach, California, far from the madding crowds of Little Italy, New York, and conveniently near the magical glitz of Hollywood.

"I was always turned on by the idea of transformation. From an early age Halloween was my favourite holiday and I loved to dress up like the Wolf Man or Dr Jekyll — although I never quite figured out how to be the Invisible Man. It was a great asset to me because I went to quite a tough elementary school where I got beat up a lot, mainly because I wasn't so tall and I was very thin." I look with complete disbelief at the six-foot-and-the-rest frame before me. "It's true! So I used to disguise myself and act like I couldn't speak English and pretend to be French — not that I could actually speak any French — and they used to leave me alone."

While he was at school, Cage read copiously and in the true tradition of any budding Method actor (and I didn't say he was), always wanted to be one of the characters he was reading about. He got out of school as quickly as he could and started doing the rounds of the casting agencies. "When I started out, I would go into an office and they knew my name was Coppola and there would be preconceived ideas about me before I even started to act; or maybe someone knew Francis and had a grudge against him, which complicated matters. When I changed my name, the reactions instantly became more honest and more favourable, so I knew it was the right choice."

His first film was *Valley Girl*, which has never seen the light of day in this country. It was a low budget film that dealt with the affair between a "punk kid and a valley girl", but Cage's performance was good enough to convince Uncle Frank that he was worth working with. *Rumblefish* followed, but everyone knew Cage was really Coppola and resented him for his familial connections. "I don't think my best work has been with my uncle because of that; I could never relax one hundred percent."

So why did he accept a part in *The Cotton Club*?

"First of all I didn't have a script when I said I'd do it, which I think now was a mistake. Had I known the nature of the part, in terms of how long it was and how long I'd have to be there and the other roles I would have to turn down because of it, I probably wouldn't have done it. I could have shot that role in three weeks but it took six months. But I was intrigued by the character; he was based on a real person called Vincent 'Mad Dog' Call, who was without question the most feared gangster in Harlem in the Twenties. No one could understand him because he was so manic and that intrigued me."

I ask him what it was like working with the reclusive Mr Gere and the effusive Bob Hoskins. He ponders for a moment and runs his fingers through his hair for the umpteenth time.

"You know, Richard is a very hard working actor," he says cautiously. "I think he really cares about acting, he doesn't deserve a lot of the sex symbol hype that he gets. I think he's a good actor, given what he does... Now, Bob Hoskins, I think, is a really terrific actor. I couldn't believe that he was British because he was always talking in a Brooklyn accent."

While shooting *The Cotton Club*, his agent introduced him to Alan Parker. "We just sat down and talked about simple things, you know, like pizza, and I thought the interview didn't amount to anything. Then my agent told me a couple of weeks later that Alan really liked me and I got excited and read the script and flipped for it."

In the end, Cage was glad to see the back of *The Cotton Club* and expresses surprise that even a half-way decent movie could come out of such prolonged disparity both on and off set. His experience on *Birdy*, however, was quite different, and Alan Parker was impressed by his professional attitude: "Nicolas spent most evenings alone in his hotel room with the script pages taped around his walls," he said later. "In my past experiences I often found young American actors are prone to 'roughly' learning their lines under the guise of greater spontaneity and the search for truth. Nicolas was uncannily faithful to the text."

"I'm pretty good at the memorisation of lines," says Cage. "But that wasn't really why I put the pages of the script on the wall; I did that more to graph the deterioration of my character. With *The Cotton Club* it was really frustrating because the actors weren't given a complete script to look at, but I think that's Francis' way of maintaining control. Since I never went to acting school, I think the variety of ways in which I can do a character and perform, whether it be with Alan giving me a script and curtailing my improvisation, or with Francis not giving me a script and giving me all the freedom with improvisation, it's not a question of which is better and which is worse, it just helps me put together my own approach to acting."

He's a self-effacing man, this Nicolas Cage. His uncle should be proud of him...



aged





● Interview by William Shaw
● Photograph by Mark Collicott

GIL SCOTT-HERON's six year old daughter has this phrase she likes to use. She stares and points and says; "Look Daddy! How strange."

"She says that all the time," says Scott-Heron with pride. "That's her reaction to things."

And like father like daughter?

"Yeah, right. 'How strange.' You see I think I was born on the wrong planet, but since I'm here I have to make the best of it."

A lanky 6'3", topped off with a dishevelled black floppy hat, Scott-Heron cuts a pretty strange figure himself, a whimsical being, laughing, grinning, relating anecdotes fuelled by his sense of the bizarre. It's all a bit at odds with the 'serious militant poet' image which has lurked around him in this country since the renewed interest in his work here after the release in 1981 of *B-Movie*, a caustic, savagely barbed deflation of the newly-elected Reagan administration.

But then one thing you have to remember is that much of the material on which his reputation rests here is ten years old or more. Those vicious pieces of tragedy like *Home Is Where The Hatred Is*, *Winter In America*, *Johannesburg* and *Angel Dust*, delivered in his richly deep and yearning voice, were all written in the early to middle seventies. It's from those songs that the image of the razorsharp streetwise social and political commentator comes. Even so, Gil! Scott-Heron's having none of it. Political Commentator? More like Radical Comic...

"Hell, I always thought I was very funny, but people didn't laugh. I thought *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised* was a scream, but that was 1971... The fact that other people didn't think it was funny didn't make it any less funny to me."

A CURIOUS and little-known fact about Gil Scott-Heron. In the early fifties his father used to play football for Celtic. (Look Daddy! How strange). Soon after he was born, his parents separated, his Jamaican father going to Scotland to pursue a career in professional football, leaving his mother to bring him up. Scott-Heron too is a great sports enthusiast, but decided at an early age that his talents lay in other directions.

"My mother was a librarian and my father was an athlete, and they both had a profound influence on me. I played basketball when I was in the States and then I realized that I'm tall but all the other guys are like seven feet. I was getting crushed nightly, so I said 'Back to the singing — lah-di-dah-di-dah!'"

By the age of 21 he'd published two books, was performing and writing music, and was about to complete his Master's degree. After a spell teaching creative writing at Washington's inner-city University, Federal City College, he abandoned his job in 1976 because of increasing commitments to his musical career.

"I took a leave of absence" he corrects. "I haven't gone back yet."

In those days Scott-Heron seemed to be more concerned with the poetry of his music, rather than with the absurdist comic quickfire of his most recent material, less with throw-away lines than the sterner sentiments of *Home Is Where The Hatred Is* or the powerful picture he painted of alcoholic self-



destruction amongst the American black population in *The Bottle*. Gil Scott-Heron disagrees.

"I mean *The Bottle* is funny in a way," he retorts obtusely. "Preacher man tried to help her out, she cussed him out and hit him in the head with the bottle! Let's face it," he laughs. "It may not be Laurel and Hardy, but it's funny. And just because people didn't see it was funny doesn't mean it wasn't."

"I mean, in other words, during that period, black artists weren't looked to for satire, so it was easy for someone to do satire and have it taken for militantism or whatever. As far as I'm concerned, if I wanted to get militant I could *really* get vicious. But what I'm doing has always been satire. I mean, come on. This is humour," he begins laughing again.

There's an element of gentle wind-up here as well, with Scott-Heron disingenuously denying any knowledge of the black militant image that seems to have gone hand-in-hand with his songs, but it is perhaps an image that has been foisted onto him to some extent by certain radical chic elements of the press.

"I didn't know it existed. You tell me what it is, how the hell should I know?" he grins. "You see, the songs that are the most publicised are the ones that are the most politically aggressive, but when people ask me things I have to talk about the *body* of the work, which is fifteen albums. Some of them didn't cover anything political, unless from what I'd done previously you applied it to some political circumstance."

More than a little mischievous, this, deliberately underplaying the more serious aspects of his work. I ask him if he feels constrained by people casting him in the role of political mouthpiece.

"No, like I'm saying, I don't let other people's definitions of me really affect me. I feel as pleased with *Johannesburg* as I do with *A Lovely Day*. The fact that *Johannesburg* was more popular doesn't upset me. I want them to be popular," he chuckles, "that's why I release them."

"But I don't feel I stand for anything that's that narrow... And I don't think that wanting everybody to have the same advantages is very radical. I think that somebody black saying 'This ain't right and we should do it over' is radical, but I think that the idea we try to promote — justice, liberty and everybody having an even break — that's the heart of democracy..."

"What I'm asking for is the things that the people in power promote. These are the things that they say we already have, and we're saying 'Look, don't worry about all of them, let's just have *one*. If we get that one, we'll work on the others!'"

But if you say you're a satirist, don't you in some way need people like Reagan?

"Oh no! I could do without people like Reagan," he smiles. "I was doing it before Reagan and after he's gone I'll probably still be doing it, so I don't need anyone who's *that* perfect," he giggles.

"I'm telling you though, he is a satire," he warms to his subject. "He doesn't even give you a chance and he's out there already. His ideas are old-fashioned. *B-Movie* was easy. After everyone had had a chance to shoot at him, *Re-Ron* (*'The Return of B-Movie', as it were; Scott-Heron's pre-election anthem*) was a bit of a challenge, to come back after three years and say something about the same attitude and still make it independently yours. That's what I'm looking for. There's certain lines in *Re-Ron* that no-one else could have written except me... 'Would we take Jesse Jackson? Hell, we'd take Michael Jackson!'"

The trouble is that there was a *Re-Ron*.

"I hear you, but it doesn't mean you needed it. I just said we don't *need* no *Re-Ron*. I didn't say we weren't going to have one..."

NDEED, *Re-Ron* was the last single chosen by his record company for release here. It seemed to show Scott-Heron moving towards a harder eighties dance sound, away from the lyrical seventies jazz and soul which fed his earlier songs. But it turns out that he himself is none too keen on the direction that the single took. For the first time since the beginning of his recording career he'd been persuaded to hand over production to someone else, Material's Bill Laswell.

"It was the first thing we did under Arista's supervision, because they wanted to try it and see how it would sound. OK, so we did it. I mean, I'm not being hostile or obstinate about the idea of working with other people. It would be foolish of me to say that I know more about it than these other people, so I go and give it a try. Arista wanted me to work with somebody like that, so I did, and now I'm going back to do what I always wanted to do."

You weren't happy with it then?

"I wasn't *unhappy* with it, it just wasn't indicative. I did one version of it and sent it to them and they said they wanted a harder sound so I couldn't object because I didn't really know what they meant. And now," he chuckles slowly, "I *object*."

In the past, Gil Scott-Heron has always been dismissive of the newer New York electro rap politics, but *Re-Ron* — perhaps just because of Laswell's production — did sound like he was coming round to that musical approach. The suggestion provokes mild irritation.

"Well I did rap records back in '70, '71. It's not a question of me having a lack of respect for them, it's just that it seems old-fashioned to me. To them it's new, so they saw it as me getting into something new. They never heard a record like *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised* or the others, so they looked at *Re-Ron* as me getting into something that I myself felt I'd left behind long before..."

So what new material can we expect?

"Well I'm trying to co-ordinate some of the material now. We've had a slight difference of opinion with the record company, but I'm sure it'll all be sorted out."

"But there are one or two things. One is *Space Shuttle*, which is a poem about how the space shuttle has started to interfere with all the weather patterns."

It has?

"Of course it has. I mean it snows more in Memphis than it does in Buffalo, and Memphis is 1500 miles *south* of Buffalo. There's something real odd. *How strange Daddy!*" he smiles broadly.

"And we got one about Frankenstein, because we think that Frankenstein got bad press. In other words Frankenstein was the doctor's name, the monster's name wasn't Frankenstein but they always call him that and it makes him so mad! He just gets really pissed off..."

"And there's a song we did that's a combination of *Star Trek* and *The Day The Earth Stood Still: Beam Me Up* — 'Beam me up, there's no intelligent life down here...' " he laughs.

You have quite a giggle about it all, don't you?

"Oh yeah, I do. I have a hell of a time," continuing his laughter. "There's this old joke about Bernard Shaw where he was at this party a very, very middle-class bourgeois thing, and midway through, the hostess comes up and says, 'Mr Shaw, I see you're here. Are you enjoying yourself?' And he says 'Yes dammit! But that's *all*! I'd like to guarantee that I'm enjoying myself!'"

Be merry for tomorrow we die. Gil Scott-Heron is not an activist — he belongs to no political group. Instead he casts himself in the role of tragic jester, perceiving the world as an absurd and sorry mess. *Look Daddy! How strange.*

HIPSWAY



'THE BROKEN YEARS'



NEW SINGLE, 7" & 12" RELEASED ON JUNE 7TH

HEY GROOVY CHICKS,
HOW'S ABOUT A DATE?





O. K., ABOUT 1972



Wrangler 
THAT'S WHAT'S GOING ON



● INSIGNIFICANCE

● BIRDY

● MASK

● MRS SOFFEL

● RESTLESS NATIVES

● THE COCA COLA KID

● GRACE QUIGLEY

● LADYHAWKE

● RUNAWAY

INSIGNIFICANCE

Directed by Nicolas Roeg. Tony Curtis, Theresa Russell, Michael Emil, Gary Busey.

■ This is only Nicolas Roeg's seventh feature film as director but I sit down to each in the sure and invigorating knowledge that a substantial, enriching feast awaits.

Insignificance, despite the title, is no exception. I'm frankly unsure what the title is supposed to suggest, other than the irrelevance of all our actions in the lengthening shadow of nuclear threat. The movie actually bears few secrets, despite Roeg's gratifying insistence on cloaking all comment in stirring, cinematic embellishment, but it does underline the grave dangers of the course we are pursuing which, in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, has monstrous precedents.

This is not, however, a film about atomic war. Taken from Terry Johnson's play of the same name, *Insignificance* describes the tragedy, as Roeg himself has indicated, of not being able to communicate. The four characters failing to communicate here are an Actress, a Professor, a Senator, and a Baseball Player. They are based, both visually and in plot verisimilitude, on Monroe, Einstein, Joe McCarthy and Joe di Maggio, Monroe's second husband. The director is adamant that this is merely a device to establish the identity of his characters, that they are intended to be purely fictional. Okay, but I still haven't a clue what he means when he says that we are *all* mythical characters.



Physics lessons were never like this at school. Michael Emil and Theresa Russell in Nic Roeg's *Insignificance*.

It probably doesn't matter.

On a sticky, oppressive summer night in 1953 the Actress seeks out the Professor in a hotel room to pass on her understanding of the Theory of Relativity. He, meanwhile, is under pressure from the Senator to renounce Communism before the House Un-American Activities Committee. The Baseball Player, desperate to salvage his marriage, arrives to flush his wife out from what he believes to be just another one-nighter. Each of them is tormented by the past, notably the Professor, whose work has contributed significantly to the development of the Bomb. The proximity of New York to Hiroshima, of 1953 to 1985, is, relatively speaking, chillingly close. We have effectively stood still. The more sweeping statement denounces our inability or unwillingness to communicate at an international level, but that gross obscenity simply mirrors our everyday rejection of reason.

This is not one of my favourite Roeg films after one viewing, but then that's like saying your fourth orgasm wasn't as good as your third. It's still articulate and refreshing. There are few directors working today who recognise, exploit and visibly stretch the possibilities of cinema language. Nic Roeg is indisputably one of them.

● MARK BRENNAN

MRS SOFFEL

Directed by Gillian Armstrong. Diane Keaton, Mel Gibson, Matthew Modine, Edward Herrmann.

● It's probably fortuitous that fact is traditionally stranger than fiction; it's doubtful whether the astonishing plot of *Mrs Soffel* would otherwise have got further than the agenda of any MGM pre-production meeting.

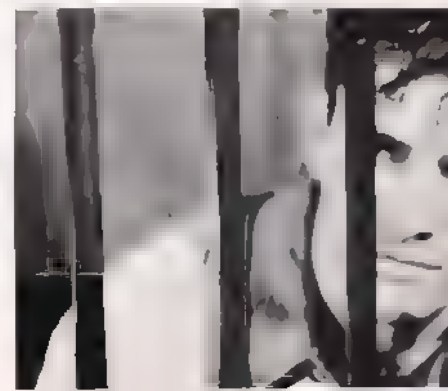
You might not believe this but in 1901, in the unromantic, industrialised town of Pittsburgh, an unlikely romance sprang up between the two most unlikely characters in the most unlikely place, with, of course, the most unlikely consequences.

Pittsburgh Jail's Death Row was housing two petty crooks, Ed and Jack Biddle, who'd been sentenced to death for a murder they had arguably committed. Like all the other prisoners they were regularly visited by the warden's wife, Mrs Kate Soffel, a solid state citizen who took God and her duties seriously. That is, until she gazed into the blue irises of Ed Biddle, fell in love with him and helped him and his brother to escape. But she didn't just stop at such a diabolical act, she abandoned her senses and her family and followed her heart and the brothers to a cruel and tragic end.

Mrs Soffel was received with little

enthusiasm in America — immorality doesn't go down too well in the land of 'the free' — and despite some excellent performances, especially from the ever-improving Mel Gibson and Matthew Modine as the Biddle brothers, it's probably of more interest to a student of American law, than a seeker of entertainment.

However, the eye for period detail is quite exquisite, accurate down to the smallest shoe button, conveying the atmosphere of a claustrophobic nightmare where everyone suffocates in the Victorian stranglehold of the prison, household, factory, and church. The obsessions of the Victorian age are reflected in *Mrs Soffel*'s act — although she was concerned for reform of the penal system which she considered out



L

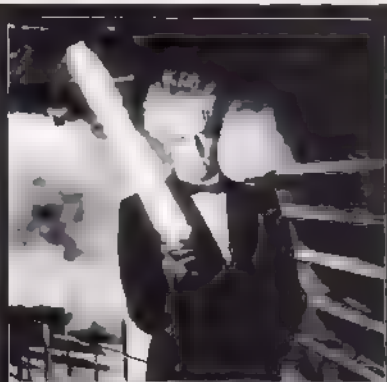
BIRDY

Directed by Alan Parker. Matthew Modine, Nicolas Cage.

■ Since Alan Parker seems to delight in being one of the more outspoken critics of that old chestnut, the auteur theory, I feel obliged to inform you that he, the producer Alan Marshall, the scriptwriter, the actors, the cameramen, the costume designers, and everyone else down to the bird trainer have without doubt combined to create the finest film so far to carry the Alan Parker credit. From start to finish, *Birdy* is never less than engrossing and features two of the finest acting performances you're likely to see in quite some time.

Through a series of extended flashbacks, we observe the story of two young men, opposites and therefore attracted, who are both mutilated, one mentally, the other physically, by the Vietnam War. Matthew Modine plays 'Birdy', a lonely, isolated boy who is obsessed by birds and the idea of flight. Nicolas Cage is Al, a tough, brash, more conventional Philadelphia youth who gradually finds himself involved in his new-found friend's world of birds. But Birdy's obsession goes further than the usual schoolboy hobby — he develops an almost sexual fondness for his pet canary and his interest in actual flight becomes more than an idle daydream.

When the pair are reunited in a military hospital after the war, Birdy has retreated totally inside himself. He perches naked and birdlike on the end of his bed and refuses to utter a word. Al, his face almost totally covered in



"May be force be with you..." Christopher Lambert in *Subway*

● Slated for September release is the new film from 26 year-old French film director Luc Besson, whose superb debut, *Le Dernier Combat* — a sort of cross between a silent *Macbeth* and *Mad Max II* — earned itself huge acclaim in France but only a limited British release. The new film, *Subway*, boasts a top-notch cast including the ravishing Isabelle Adjani and former Tarzan Christopher Lambert, and is a thriller in the stylish *Diva*-esque mould, set in and around the underground world of the Paris metro. Sounds fab — despite latest reports that the first five minutes have been re-edited to accommodate a bit of commercial pulling power in the shape of a song from Frankie Goes To Hollywood. Still, nobody's perfect...

● TOM ELIOT

M

taste — should it be happy or sad? Since I don't want to reveal too much I'll just say that I think Parker chose the wrong one. But it doesn't matter too much, since *Birdy* has much else to recommend it. The fantasy flying sequences are quite breathtaking and Parker for once has resisted the urge to overdo the sentiment. Finely judged, brilliantly acted — a British director has made an outstanding film in British Film Year.

Who would have thought it possible?

● TIM HULSE



of date and inhumane, she was largely ignored as an idealist by her stiff-collared husband. She may have genuinely believed the Biddles were innocent and wanted to avert the inevitable course of so-called justice, but passion and romance awoke in her a desperate need to escape from her own prison.

Directed by Australian Gillian Armstrong (whose first film a few years ago, *My Brilliant Career*, seemed to herald the start of her own), *Mrs Soffel* allows Mad Mel to draw in a particularly realistic American accent while further flexing his acting muscles. He's ably supported by Matthew Modine (also to be seen in Alan Parker's *Birdy*) and it's only the dreary Diane Keaton who lets the side down.

● JUDY LIPSEY

Mel Gibson locked up in Judy Lipsey's cellar awaiting his daily 'ministering'. (Mrs Soffel)



MASK

Directed by Peter Bogdanovich.
Cher, Sam Elliott, Eric Stoltz.

Like several other forthcoming releases, *Mask* is a film which, according to reports from Cannes, has been marred, or perhaps enlivened, by clashes between members of the cast and crew. One begins to wonder whether this kind of ambiguous publicity is actually concocted by some innovative, unorthodox, and perverse PR to envelop the product in controversy. The practice sounds more polemical than the effect to me, but I'd be less than outraged if I discovered it went on.

It is immensely sad, though, that petty in-fighting should have diverted attention from the film itself, which speaks eloquently of courage and humanity. *Mask* is based on the true story of Rocky Dennis, an American teenager disfigured by a rare congenital disease which produces an abnormally large skull — the Mask of the title. The moving relationship between Rocky and his mother, upon which the boy's 'normality' is founded, is of chief importance here, and, indeed, their interdependence, camaraderie and

playful sparring is deftly and, which is remarkable, unsentimentally handled. Had they been a conventional, God-fearing, suburban family this would have been difficult to get away with. As it is, the mother, played by Cher, is a promiscuous, decadent, foul-mouthed biker. I've honestly been awed by the quality of all Cher's acting work so far and here she manages, against the odds, to endow Rusty, hard as nails, with vulnerability and compassion. Eric Stoltz, too, as the afflicted youth, brings just the right calm amiability to his role.

In general I abhor tear-jerkers because I provide the appropriate response with humiliating readiness. But I'll countenance no cynical bellyaching about *Mask*, for it is nothing short of a genuinely affecting record of epic dignity.

MARK BRENNAN



Now that's what we call a coppiece! Tom Selleck in *Runaway*.

RUNAWAY

Tom Selleck, Cynthia Rhodes, Gene Simmons

That has to be the most ill-advised title for a film in a long time. Nobody at the screening did run away. I should add, but when the suspense ought to have enticed them to the edge of their seats they were actually falling off them in spasms of mirth brought on by some pretty daft dialogue. In a city of the near future, a 'runaway' is an out-of-control robot: anything from a pest-controller gone berserk in the field, as it were, to a glorified teasmade turned homicidal killer. Tom Selleck plays a cop in the Runaway Squad, who is assigned a new partner in the eminently acceptable form of Cynthia Rhodes. Familiar? It must be said that I didn't give a single, solitary damn what came of them. The technology is all very distracting but *Runaway* tries to be all things to all men: sci-fi, romance, father and son, cops and robbers, thriller, comedy. It has absolutely everything and yet it has nothing.

MARK BRENNAN



Smiles all around at the Sounds editorial meeting. (A scene from *Mask*)

POLICE ACADEMY 2

Steve Guttenberg, Bubba Smith, David Graf, etc.

After the puerile, feeble-minded nonsense of *Police Academy* comes, yes you guessed it, the puerile, feeble-minded nonsense of *Police Academy 2*. Here we witness our favourite wacky young recruits on 'Their First Assignment'. It's all something to do with a gang who have been terrorising the neighbourhood and of course after a series of disasters our heroes come up trumps. The average twelve year-old will probably enjoy this film tremendously. The average BLITZ film reviewer has to admit he caught himself laughing on more than one occasion. *Police Academy 3* will no doubt be coming your way soon. Not to mention *Police Academy 4*, *Police Academy 5*, *Police Academy 236*...

TIM HULSE

THE COCA COLA KID

Eric Roberts, Greta Scacchi.

If you read the interview with Greta Scacchi elsewhere in this issue you will learn that this was not the happiest of productions. The antics and unpredictability of an obtuse, difficult director allied with the prima donna pouting of a narcissistic male lead rendered the lengthy shoot in the Antipodes a distressing experience for the attractive English actress. With inside knowledge it's easy to see where, at least from one point of view, the film is flawed but, doubtless, Greta Scacchi stands alone in her opinion. Gladly none of these antagonisms is betrayed by the film itself, which relates the comical outcome of the descent on Coca-Cola's Sydney office of a shit-hot trouble-shooter from U.S. Headquarters. This Southern-drawing ton of bricks in a suit arrives even before the telex announcing his despatch from America and sets straight to work — pulling up the collective socks of a bewildered personnel.

Director Dusan Makavejev will be best remembered for *Montenegro* and *WR: The Mysteries of the Organism*. This new film, which again parodies fundamental social differences, is highly improbable cinema material. But he has moulded it into his idiosyncratic style and laced it with his characteristic anarchy, humour and satire. Sadly this sometimes has the adverse effect of trivialising his own themes, and for me it's a less incisive work than the previous *Montenegro*. So there!

MARK BRENNAN

THE LAST DRAGON

Taimak, Vanity, Chris Murney, Julius Carry III.

This is more like it. The King of Motown, Berry Gordy, has actually come up with something immensely entertaining that has more weight to it than the usual candy floss pop video. *Fame* meets *Kung Fu*, to give its full title, *Berry Gordy's The Last Dragon* (hopefully not setting a precedent for more executive producers to get their names in movie titles as well as the credits) and moves along at a cracking pace with buckets of laughs from the tight fist script. There's Leroy (Taimak), a gentle soul, well into kung fu whose hero is Bruce Lee, Laura (Prince's former heart-throb, Vanity), a baddy called Eddle who'll do anything to get his Leaper-ish girlfriend's video onto Laura's TV show and the meanest, the baddest man about town, Sho'nuff, whose costume and entourage crosses the Mikado with Mad Max. *The Last Dragon* is serious fun — if you ignore the Ready Brek glow when Leroy and Sho'nuff get to grips to find out who the real kung fu master is — and the climactic scene — a disco dance floor swirling with leaping martial arts aged six and up — is breathtaking in its timing. Fantastic? Sho'nuff!

JUDY LIPSEY

GRACE QUIGLEY

Katharine Hepburn, Nick Nolte.

Apparently Katharine Hepburn invested a considerable amount of time and energy trying to bring *Grace Quigley* to the screen. Maybe it seemed a good idea at the time. Originally prefixed 'The Ultimate Solution Of...', the resulting film is a thoroughly confusing proposition. Hepburn plays the ageing spinster of the title who one day sees professional hitman Nolte bumping off her landlord. The two go into business together arranging an early demise for all the old duffers of Hepburn's acquaintance who have decided for whatever reason to throw in the towel. Presumably the film is intended as the blackest of black comedy. By the end, at any rate, it has descended into total farce. Without wishing to be against about this, I feel I should warn you that Hepburn's permanently trembling features are rather wearing on the eyes. The great Nolte is as usual the great Nolte. Time he got himself in another decent film.

TIM HULSE

LADYHAWKE

Rutger Hauer, Michelle Pfeiffer, Matthew Broderick, Leo McKern.

Americans with Arthurian names — Etienne de Navarre, Philippe Gaston, Isabelle de something or other — in a full-blown sword and sorcery quest shot in Italy. By day she turns into a hawk, by night he turns into a wolf, cursed never to meet as humans by an evil and rather constipated-looking bishop. The magical themes are plausible in their way, but perhaps there are too many of them. Hauer hams it up in his own inimitable fashion, his knight errant being a compromise between *Blade Runner*'s Roy Batty and the romantic woodoo lord in *Eureka*. I'm more than halfway inclined to write, 'visually stunning' at the bottom here, and have done with it. The script is flawed — the ending is paced much too slowly — but as these sort of films go, it's a good long way better than average.

MARK ISSUE

RESTLESS NATIVES

Vincent Friell, Joe Mullaney, Teri Lally.

Restless Natives is the second feature from the admirable Oxford Film Company, which was established in 1980 by two Americans at Oxford, Rick Stevenson and Michael Hoffmann, who here take producer and director credits respectively. Since its inception, their venture has attracted the patronage of such luminaries as David Puttnam and John Schlesinger. Their first film, *Privileged*, was generally acclaimed as a competent and promising debut, and this follow-up will surely not disappoint. Set in present-day Edinburgh, its tone is, most obviously, redolent of Bill Forsyth's work. This observation is perhaps not altogether surprising when you consider that the team of Scottish technicians employed on *Restless Natives* is Forsyth's regular chosen crew as well, and that scriptwriter Ninlan Dunnnett is also a native of Scotland. The restless natives of the title are two 'underemployed' working class youths who dream of great deeds and even greater amounts of money, and who resolve, albeit falteringly, naively, and hilariously, to realise their misguided ambitions at the expense of the tourists who swell Edinburgh's population all year round. It's all quite unbelievable, sensibly resisting the siren of Social Significance, but it manages to be a parable of sorts and it's a lot more fun than *The Prodigal Son*.

MARK BRENNAN

FASHION KILLS!

"ANYONE WHO GETS INVOLVED WITH THE WORLD OF FASHION HAS HER OWN SELF-DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIOUR. THE CONSTANT PRESSURE TO BEAT THE OTHERS THROUGH IT, THE CONSTANT FEELING OF NOT BEING GOOD ENOUGH, THE FACT THAT SHE'S ON HER OWN... IT'S A MANIACAL STATE."

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●The last journalist with whom Greta Scacchi had lunched at this particular Soho restaurant had to be carried to a taxi afterwards, having succumbed somewhat to the Sancerre. Not a word of their conversation had been recorded and the resultant article, she recalls ruefully, was ■ work of

total fiction. Striving to provide a more upright (literally) impression of the writing fraternity, I soberly promise the truth and nothing but, and order a Perrier.

For a 24 year-old, Greta Scacchi has some highly prestigious work behind her. She first came to

attention, unforgettably, in the excellent Marchant/Ivory production *Heat and Dust*. Roles followed in *The Ebony Tower*, with Lord Olivier, and *Dr. Fischer of Geneva*, alongside Alan Bates and James Mason. For the time being she's represented by *The Coca-Cola Kid* (reviewed elsewhere in this issue), a contemporary comedy directed by Yugoslavian emigre Dusan Makavejev, which opens later this month. To follow are a promising new British feature, *Defence of the Realm*, and an American TV remake of *Camille*, in which she recreates the 1936 Garbo role of a tubercular courtesan.

She appears in sickeningly good health when we meet, however. Dressed determinedly down, in leather blouson and jeans, she exudes ■ waifish charm that enhances her natural beauty. But wait: Greta begins foaming at the mouth her nostrils flare ominously. Could it be the soup, or was it the mention of *that* film? The ensuing diatribe would indicate that the soup is in the clear.

"I was very disappointed with *Coca-Cola Kid*. It was mainly my pride that was hurt. The thing about being an actress is that you do rely on other people in order to do your art. So the actual creative side is shared by lots of people. But you want to feel that you have a considerable amount of control at least over how you yourself are portrayed. So when the end result is so completely different from what you hoped and imagined..."

This was news to me. I'd seen the film, liked it, and now I learn that one of the stars is dismayed over the outcome. *The Coca-Cola Kid* concerns the upheaval which occurs when the U.S. office of the world's most famous soft drinks company despatches its top troubleshooter to Australia to chivvy up the Sydney operation. Greta maintains that in the six months separating her acceptance of the part and the eventual signing of Eric Roberts for the male lead the script was drastically altered to the detriment of her role. And then things started to turn bad.

"Dusan had ■ huge group of some of the most talented technicians and artists in America just dying to have a part in his film and do anything for it. I've never seen a crew who were so enthusiastic. And a producer who was, in a way, naively dedicated to the film. He allowed Dusan to do and demand ■ lot more than most producers would and yet at the time he just walked all over these people. You just got slapped in the face for anything you came forward with. That's what made it so unhappy for me.

"What made it worse, I think, is that Dusan grew to hate Australia. He was in this prison of an apartment for six months. Of course anyone would begin to hate a place. He really did begin to despise the society. He was chauvinistic to the extreme, jingoistic, fascist, you name it. He couldn't wait to get out. Now that he's back in Europe he probably has quite a fond memory of the place."

Greta, however, does not, although the fact that many audiences have warmed to the film has assuaged her indignation.

Suddenly saliva flies across the table and comes to rest on my exotic fruit salad. "Jesus Christ, did you have to kick me in the balls?!!" shouts Greta. I am relieved not to be the owner of said balls and the saliva is hers. As she goes on to explain, her run-in with Makavejev was ■ storm in ■ teacup compared with the open conflict which raged between her and co-star Roberts, who pronounced this anguished exclamation on completion of their only love scene together. In the course of a previous equally strained exchange Greta had suggested that Eric take himself off and perform unnatural acts alone. Looking at her now such rancour hardly seems credible. On film the prurient charge which passes between them perhaps validates the proverbial thin line between love and hate, but Greta's having none of it.

"It was worse than prostitution for me. You try spending three days naked with a man you despise."

I just manage to prevent myself remarking, jovially and genuinely, that only a true pro could have gone through with it. Coffee, anyone?

GRETA SCACCHI



ANDREW

CATINE

What Kind Of World



A FACE

•

A SOUND

A LOOK

•

A STYLE





L

PENELOPE SPHEERIS

● Interview by Paul Mather
● Photograph by Mark Collicott

● Fresh from a business meeting at the iCA, Penelope Spheeris insists on changing from posh frock to more trendy gear for the photo session.

"It's just habit. In America particularly I have to dress up like an almost normal person when I go to meet the executives. They're not as likely to give me five million dollars when I look like a bag of trash."

The unwillingness to invest in this rather unorthodox film maker is understandable given her recent choice of subject matter, that wild and wicked world of punk rock.

Her new film *Suburbia*, about to open in London, is perhaps the first US film about punks to neither glamorise nor caricature the world it portrays. Also, whereas *Times Square*, *Smithereens* and *Liquid Sky* all concerned themselves largely, and with differing degrees of success, with the novelty value of the punks themselves, *Suburbia* opens things out effectively to a consideration of the way they fit into any analysis of the state of contemporary America.

"Mine was a sociological interest. They could have been Martians or alligators or anything, but if they made a social standpoint I was interested. I wanted to know why people behave as they do in 1980's America. I think it comes from that whole generation of peace and love parents who were hippies and smoking dope then woke up. They were too busy trying to catch up with the American Dream to take any notice of their kids."

Penelope Spheeris is not about to fit in easily. The daughter of a Greek amusement park owner, she spent her childhood on the road with the Magic Empire Carnival until her father was murdered in Alabama and her family subsequently settled in California. Her mother was an alcoholic and married nine times. Penelope studied film at UCLA, paying her bills by working as a cocktail waitress in a strip joint. After graduating she helped form Rock 'n' Reel, a company producing videos and films for Fleetwood Mac and the Doobie Brothers amongst others. A far cry from the punk world of *Suburbia*.

"It certainly is, but it was something that gave me a very good grounding in terms of becoming a film maker."

After producing for cult comedian Albert Brooks on *Saturday Night Live*, she was asked, and agreed, to produce his film *Real Life*.

"I had an option then to become very mainstream but that whole environment meant that you had to be so mean to people all the time, preferred not to do it."

"I started going to a lot of punk concerts and saw people filming them with super 8 cameras. I thought, 'this is what I want to make films about and so I made a documentary about the LA scene called *The Decline Of Western Civilization*. That was in '79 but it only got limited distribution because it was a documentary so I decided to write a dramatic story based on reality, *Suburbia*."

Through her agent, she managed to get as her producer the highly influential Roger Corman, a man who has launched the careers of most of the

new breed of American movie brats among them Coppola and Joe Dante. "I was talking to Roger and I asked him what was the most films he'd made with one director. He said it was two. I asked why and he said that directors tended to either give up or, like Coppola and Scorsese, turn out to be such geniuses that he couldn't afford to finance their next efforts. So, historically, I've got two options - I can either become a genius film maker or turn into a bag lady."

In making *Suburbia* was there a temptation to glamorise the punks because of the bad deal they've got in the past?

"If I'm honest, yes there was, because a lot of the kids I know and like as friends. I think in the end though, it's a fairly accurate representation."

Real punks as opposed to actors were used for the film. It must have been difficult to keep in control of it all.

"Well we did have five crew members murdered! No, there was hardly any trouble. We rehearsed solidly eight hours a day for a month and they hated it. They wanted to be stars fast and didn't want to work at it, but it was useful because it meant we could tighten up a lot of the dialogue."

Two punk films in a row is getting you a reputation.

"It is, and I don't want to be a punk rock spokesperson. I'd much rather leave that to the people who are actually part of the movement. My new film, thank God, is not about punk rock. It's called *The Boys Next Door* and it stars Maxwell Caulfield and Charlie Sheen. It's about two clean-cut Californian teenagers who go to LA for the weekend and commit four murders."

The multiple murders trend is soaring alarmingly in America, following on from the Hillside Strangler, Son of Sam, and others. One person has apparently confessed to over two hundred seemingly indiscriminate killings. What sort of film did you want to make?

"A psychological character study of the mind of a murderer, rather like *In Cold Blood*. I think I understand to a degree what happens to people who bottle up so much anger. They don't know that they're going to kill people, but then something happens, and they explode."

"I'd like to try to make relatively mainstream movies but I'm so weird in the head that I couldn't even get close to the middle of the road."

Is punk now a marketable cinematic commodity?

"Well, what Hollywood people think punk is is quite different. They think that Madonna's a punk, that Cyndi Lauper's a punk. They don't understand that being a millionaire and being a punk are mutually exclusive!"

So do you feel any kindred spirits?

"I liked *Valley Girl* and I think Alex Cox is great. There's hope for Hollywood yet."

Her next project seems intriguing. *Boy Child* is the story of a boy raised by animals and of his real mother's fight to keep him. It suggests that Penelope Spheeris could be yet another of Corman's aptitude discoveries.

"Yeah well, I fucked up. Filmmaking is the only thing I can do!"

● "Thousands of dreams inside your hearts rest in the message of hope in the songs of a man so many young Americans admire — New Jersey's

● "If all Americans...made their products with as much energy and confidence as Springsteen and

bruce w

The Selling of BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN

It's taken almost ten years for British feeling for Bruce Springsteen to reach the level of near-religious hysteria that he provokes in the States. In the last six months, though, he's managed to notch up an impressive run of hit singles and the kind of Fleet Street tabloid coverage hitherto reserved only for the 'gender-bendering' exploits of Boy George and Marilyn. SIMON POTTER digs a little deeper into the myth behind the man.

SO WHY the hysteria? The medicine show rolls into town and what do you know, they've downed tools on the factory floor, taken time out in the typing pool — The Boss has come to pay his respects.

Bruce Springsteen is in this country for the first time since 1981, and the deification process, a long time coming, now seems complete. But then we tend to take our religious figures more seriously than the dial-a-prayer preachers with their credit card flock across the Atlantic.

That being said, what other reasons account for the delayed reaction in the UK when Middle America has been grasping at this New Jersey son for over ten years?

Maybe it's because Springsteen writes and performs music for wide open spaces, easily exploited by an aspiring, car-owning population with fully paid-up medical insurance. Despite his working class eulogies, politically-minded critics still point to the fact that his material is hardly likely to upset the rigid American status quo. Pulling factory girls under the board walk is hardly going to

precipitate a political crisis, now is it?

Yet Springsteen's latest work on *Born In The USA* would seem to dispel at least part of this criticism as he comes to terms with life in an America embittered by the Vietnam experience. As the Reagan administration whips itself into a frenzy over Star Wars and regressive tax cuts, Springsteen has chosen the right time to become reflective, albeit through the smalltown scenarios that compose his world view.

So you shouldn't be put off by the overly nationalistic stars and stripes cover on *Born In The USA*, because the contents reveal a man confused by the events overtaking the disparate and desperate in the land of the free where nothing comes cheap.

But I digress. What remains is the fact that when it comes to the macho ache, nobody does it better. The tough guy with the soft inside is an image that even us conservative suburbanites can identify with. It's probably the one rock'n'roll image that hasn't dated, doesn't look too absurd.

So why has Britain fallen adoringly into line? Well, for all of the reasons mentioned in the last paragraph plus a few more.

First off, Springsteen now seems to acknowledge the importance of the singles charts. As CBS dutifully re-released *Dancing In The Dark* it was obvious they were pitching for a whole new market. So how did the marketing strategy of Springsteen's long time record company affect his huge growth in popularity over here?

The myth was born out of what was, ten or so years ago, the most overblown and extravagant piece of marketing hype the music industry had ever known. In 1974, a music

critic and part-time record producer, Jon Landau, went to see Springsteen play a small club gig in Boston, and subsequently told one astonished colleague that he would happily give up all his work writing for Rolling Stone if he could spend the rest of his time producing Springsteen. In his review of the gig, Landau declared: "Last Thursday I saw my rock'n'roll past flash before my eyes. And I saw something else: I saw rock'n'roll future and its name is Bruce Springsteen. And on a night when I needed to feel young again, he made me feel like I was hearing music for the first time."

After a slight change in the grammar, Landau's ecstatic declaration became the keystone of a vast and hugely expensive advertising campaign, much of it centred around Springsteen's first major British concert tour. "I have seen the future of rock'n'roll and its name is Bruce Springsteen!" screamed giant billboard posters announcing London gigs. "I have seen the future of rock'n'roll at Hammersmith Odeon!" shouted hundreds of badges printed up to celebrate the occasion. Meanwhile Springsteen's management refused any interviews unless a front cover was guaranteed, and New York Times writer Henry Edwards almost out-did Landau in an article entitled 'If There Hadn't Been A Bruce Springsteen, Then The Critics Would Have Made Him Up'. And so a star was born.

To be fair, Springsteen lived up to all expectations, though not necessarily immediately, and somewhere along the line the hype gave way to an equally celebratory consensus of opinion. In the eleven years since then Springsteen has, among other

own Bruce Springsteen... Helping to make these dreams come true is what this job of mine is all about." Ronald Reagan, New Jersey, September 1984.

his merry band, there would be no need for Congress to be thinking about protectionism." Conservative US columnist George F. Will, September 1984.

no?

achievements, been described repeatedly — but most notably by the New York Times — as "the best rock performer ever", has appeared simultaneously on the covers of both Newsweek and Time, and has, in *Born In The USA*, given his American record company their biggest selling album of all time. Seven million Americans — or one out of every eight US citizens between 20 and 34 years of age — own a copy of The Boss' most recent album.

But although the strength of American feeling for Springsteen long ago surpassed the religious mark, the British have, despite the mid-seventies hype, been noticeably slow about following suit. In fact it's only in the last year that Springsteen has made the crossover from an older, more sedate and less demonstrative audience here to the highly lucrative youth market. The reason? A series of high-charting singles, and, most important of all, Brian de Palma's video clip for *Dancing in the Dark*. The way the story goes, for his first real promotional video, Springsteen would only agree to give a performance if it was shot at one of his gigs. No stifling storyboard for him. The result? A blistering glimpse of his live show for the uninitiated and a place in the UK top 5. A whole new audience was exposed to the bar room boy from Freehold, New Jersey.

The man responsible for Springsteen's live shows in Britain, promoter Harvey Goldsmith, makes no secret of the admiration he feels for his client. Goldsmith revealed that there's no case of champagne and caviar backstage for Springsteen, just the occasional reminder from him that the audience is his friend and shouldn't be messed with. Apparently, so innocuous and low-key is Springsteen's presence backstage, that he could easily be



mistaken for a roadie.

In exchange, we get three hours of highly charged, no holds barred (and other clichés too numerous to mention) rock'n'roll. A showcase which Springsteen's new guitarist Nils Lofgren describes as "truly awesome. His talent is beyond my comprehension."

Lofgren's predecessor, E-Street man Miami Steve Van Zandt was another devotee of Springsteen's mission who left the fold to agitate against the America he once felt proud of. Many think it was Miami Steve who renewed Springsteen's perspectives on the *Born In The USA* LP. Miami Steve wouldn't take any credit, but it was clear the parting was painful. "We were family," he's been known to mutter emotionally.

But it was a relationship of a different kind that's made Springsteen front page news prior to his latest visit. His marriage to a 25 year-old model and actress ten years his junior, Julianne Phillips, had the tabloids falling over themselves to get the inside story (not to mention his inside leg measurement) on the hottest property since Boy George died of overexposure. The Mirror's Gill Pringle put it this way: "The fact that Springsteen has never

been willing to perpetuate his own legend by giving sensational steamy interviews goes some way to explain why it's taken so long for him to become a big tabloid figure. The national media like these idols to be involved with pretty girls and so Springsteen's marriage to Julianne Phillips made him a tabloid favourite."

As a result, front page news on the tabloids, space previously reserved only for the shock-horror antics of Boy George and Marilyn. It's as simple as that. More fuel to fan the flames, and the marketing men smiling all the way to the next board meeting. But then we could study cause and effect all day. All I know is that within two hours of the announcement of Springsteen's dates, CBS Records received two thousand enquiring phone calls. How many major league artists would leave it at that and just let those noughts accumulate? Most, by my reckoning. Not this one though. With the donation of £16,000 to the wives of former striking miners, Springsteen has proved that he's never forgotten where he came from — a tiny downtown apartment next to a gas station. A showbiz gesture? I think you're too harsh.



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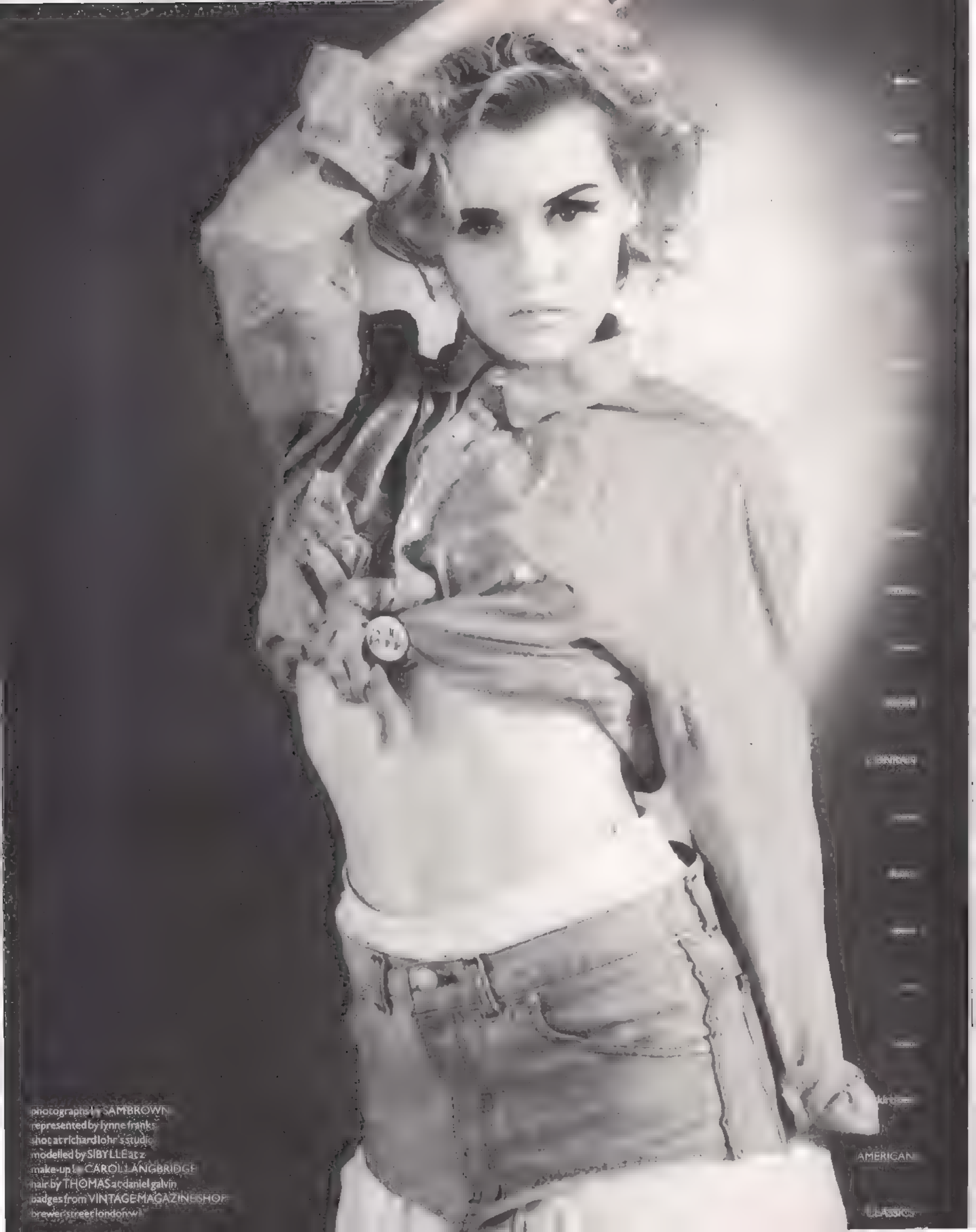
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MAXI PRIEST

● In the offices of Virgin's subsidiary label, 10 Records, sits the striking figure of Maxi Priest, locks concealed under a voluminous beret, a scattering of gold chains around his neck.

Maxi Priest's presence there is evidence of the record companies' realization that the recent vigour of British reggae is going to provide something that's well worth cashing in on, which is fine by him, Maxi explains affably, just as long as he doesn't have to change anything he's doing.

There could be a few reasons for British reggae's vivaciousness over the last couple of years. Firstly there's the decline of Jamaican reggae with the tailing off of output from the great studios. Then there's the scores of radio stations here — pirate and legal — who've discovered a huge audience for black music and who have done so much for both soul and reggae, especially through the publicity given to Maxi and others by DJ's like Capital's hugely influential David Rodigan. And then again

there's a whole new breed of artists who've been painstakingly learning their art on the sound systems. Maxi Priest is amongst the most accomplished: his last single *Should I* has been the most enduringly indispensable of all the dance hall classics.

His fresh and optimistic style, self-dubbed 'New Vogue Reggae', comes from a number of sources, first and most important being that time that Maxi spent working the sound systems, as a schoolboy with his own *Gladiator* set-up in the halls of South London, and then with the famous Saxon International.

The list of names of those who worked with the Saxon system now reads like a roll call of all the recent innovators of UK reggae: Peter King, the 'fast style originator'; Philip Levi, whose *Mi God Mi King* was one of the cross-over successes of last year; Smiley Culture, one of the most charismatic new figures to emerge; Asher Senator, Smiley's sparring partner and Fashion records stablemate — they all spent their early years as MC's at countless late night dances.

From being DJ's, each artist began to develop their own styles to attract the audience's attention: "I used to get a lot of vibes from running a sound system. When we first started it was like you came to the dance and you held on to the mike and you said the first thing that came into your head. When we went back home we'd listen to the tape and we'd say to ourselves, we've got a verse here, then we'd turn that into a song, so we could go onto the mike and sound professional."

Maxi finally quit the sound system to form his own label: "Everybody knows, in a sound system it's a hard life, having to work all night and not really getting anything at the end of the week."

The label, *Bad Breed*, was the result of a collaboration between Maxi and Paul Robinson, the lead singer with *One Blood*, and producer of Maxi's debut LP for 10 Records, *You're Safe*.

But the main thing which distinguishes Maxi's style from other UK innovators' less melodic verbal styles is his absorption of the skills of the great Jamaican reggae artists, notably Dennis Brown.

"Studio One was like a school to me, and when people like Dennis Brown and Alton Ellis were singing on Studio One, those guys tended to use a lot of keys, a lot of harmonies, a lot of different angles. I actually taught myself listening to those guys. I've always been a cultured youth y'know, I've always looked to my people and kept my culture."

Moving the music on to major labels is the final step at transcending the ghetto structure of the small reggae labels: "You can have something in London that's been going for five or six weeks and nobody outside London knows of it, y'know what I mean? Before I was in 10 Records I didn't even know there was such a thing as promotion... people actually going out and promoting and plugging the music. That," he grins and gazes around the room. "That is another side to the story altogether..."

● "My parents went to a Fundamentalist Church so I wasn't allowed to listen to rock and roll. I used to make do. I didn't start listening to pop music until I was about twelve. I listened to the radio and most of it was awful. I didn't listen to music seriously till I was sixteen. Started buying Little Richard and Elvis Presley records."

You didn't become a Fundamentalist?
"Me? Well . . ." Maria McKee, **Lone Justice's** singer, chuckles at the thought. Church smurgh. Rock and Roll is their religion. A few months ago they were 'just' another cog in the weird and wonderful LA Dream Machine, which was (and still is) feverishly bringing bands to our attention. Bands like the Long Ryders, Green On Red

and the Three O'Clock. Now however, Lone Justice look like they're going to get a chance to call the shots.

They landed the prestigious U2 support slot Stateside, for a start — a daunting introduction to touring. Did they enjoy it?

"It was scary," says Maria in a near whisper. Was it? "A little bit at first. It started to get real fun towards the end . . . we'd never really seen the States."

Is U2's American following pretty selective when it comes to support bands?

"They've got a real cultish-type following," replies guitarist Ryan Hedgecock, running his hand through a shock of auburn hair. "Giant, but cultish. They love U2 and they love stuff that sounds like that. We came out of left-

field, I think they were confused by us, until we took a proper attitude on stage.

"At first it was really disorientating, but we learnt to go on stage with an aggressive attitude . . . just to really go for it. And once we started doing that, the audience reaction changed."

Lone Justice play country-rooted rock with a penchant for dramatic guitars and choruses. They're not afraid to admit to influences. They are, first and foremost, fans. Maria: "I have a lot of hillbilly and bluegrass records . . . a lot of country, rockabilly, soul, Stax as well as . . . I really like Lou Reed and the Velvet Underground. There's certain new bands that I like — have you heard the Replacements?"

Too right, baby. I've thrown out all the old models.

Do you think pop music is dispensible?

"That's a funny question! Sometimes it is, sometimes it can be. But I think if a song's very important you can remember it for years and years. Like *Baby Love* — that's such a pop song, it's so important . . . it has such

an importance to it."

The nearest Lone Justice come to being important (in that sense) is *Sweet Sweet Baby* — a fuscious soul stormer which is a whisker away from being "such a pop song".

Live, the band do their debut album justice and then some. Where on record they sound occasionally lacklustre, plain bland even, on stage they capitalize on the good things and virtually eschew any lasting MOR poses. As a closer I ask Maria about the remark made in an interview with them recently wherein one of the band had said "Jimmy Iovine (who produced their album) makes very competitive records". I don't like that word 'competitive', somehow.

"That was Marvin," laughs Maria. "I don't really see it that way. I think Jimmy's got a lot of soul. He knows about songs and that's real important. We were saying earlier about how a pop song can be fleeting or it can have a bit of importance to it. He has a way of making records that sound good and feel good too. And that's the way I feel about it." Touché.

Jay Williams



Mark Bayley

● Some time ago, when I was a humble fanzine writer in Liverpool, I interviewed a young woman called Jayne Casey and tried to convince the world that her group Pink Military Stand Alone were worth whooping for. Her last group had been the rather legendary Big In Japan and one of her friends from it was also trying to make a name for himself. He was the campest cowboy in town and was a nice boy, but a conceivable superstar? Never!

His name was Holly Johnson and he's sort of popular now, I hear.

Always one to make the same mistake twice, I'm out to tell you yet again that Jayne Casey's still worth looking out for. Her group's now called **Pink Industry** and their new single, *What I Wouldn't Give*, has got Mr Steven Morrissey on the cover. The LP is appropriately called *New Beginnings* and a meeting with Jayne and fellow Pinkie, Ambrose Reynolds, gave an opportunity to tie up a few loose ends.

Why the change from Pink Military to Pink Industry?

"It was caused by a two year gap, and at the moment with the sort of thing we're doing Industry sounds better than Military.

"We've been away going through our domestic period. Ambrose has got a daughter, so we've both got children now. The new album's influenced by the domesticity. It's got electric razor solos and Hoover solos."

The rest of Jayne and Ambrose's time has been taken up with "just the day-to-day business of living without much money" as well as starting a club called The Sunday Club with Will of the Bunnymen.

"Tickets are free but there's just a couple of hundred, so it's a dead good event. It's on Sunday afternoons and no one knows what's going to happen."

The Bunnymen have already played and future plans include Julian Cope and The Smiths. Is she a pioneer putting everything back into her home town?

"Not really, no. I just think that it's important, when I've got the power I've got, to use it to help businesses here that are struggling. There's loads of dead good

designers here, like Laurence, and a girl called Lucy Jones. They're much better than most of the London designers but being in Liverpool they just don't get noticed."

The future still appears bright for Pink Industry, with lots of plans ("Zulu Record and Tape Dispensers"; a song in Frank Clarke's film *Letter To Brezhnev*; a "municipal" sounding LP with geese on it), but for the moment the current single is the major preoccupation. It is being sold as a video single rather than just a single with an accompanying video, maintaining PI's method of never taking the obvious route.

"I like being slightly on the outside of things. It's nice when things enter by the back door. Although having said that, I do feel more commercially orientated, mainly because I

think . . . I'd like some money! No, at the moment we're moving in two directions at once, getting softer and harder at the same time. Perhaps it'll end up as a kind of avant-garde pop."

Finally, why's Morrissey on the sleeve?

"Oh that's just 'cos I've got a crush on him! We were dead peeved when he agreed to be on, but if he hadn't we'd have used Johnny Marr instead, to spite him. It's all a laugh. Just the wrapping paper to the actual songs."

So are you going to do it without the wrapping paper?

"Oh no we've got LOADS of wrapping paper!"

Paul Mathur

You don't have to sell your grandmother to afford it,



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SHRIEKBACK

● Shriekback are one of those groups who inhabit alternative pop's netherworld. Always there, a name in the new releases column, but never the one that you assiduously hunt for. Some of the singles, particularly last year's *Hand On My Heart*, have almost broken through to the chart masses and the current single *Nemesis* deserves to do even better.

With a sparkling new album about to be released, the prospect of this summer's Shriekback seems fairly probable. And on one sunny summer morning in Arista's sumptuous boardroom, I met lyricist Carl Marsh to delve deeper into this thing called Shriekback. A pop band already?

"I don't know about being conventionally poppy. The new stuff is certainly a lot more direct."

The thing was that when we were on Y Records we were doing loads of really diverse stuff, from the dance base of *Lined Up* to just noise. After that, with Jam Scene we were very conscious of wanting to make a clean, uniform album. Now we want a combination of the two, diversity but with a certain overallness to it."

The 'intelligent pop' tag, one that's often been applied to Shriekback and it's one that they're not entirely happy with. Nevertheless, their pop is an obviously different proposition from that put forward by Little Nik or Horrible Howie. Could they really settle in?

"The hardest part is getting through the whole record company and label things. If you've got enough strength of intent and control, then they don't have to resort to taking up the slack with what's gone before. We can get the sort of stuff you want out into the marketplace if you're sure enough of what it is you want."

Nevertheless it's the public consumption that matters, and what Shriekback peddle are hardly conventional pop songs but rather slices of sound. A pop group incapable of writing pop songs?

"No, it's just that we're prime intercomers in throwing things together to see what it mutates. I've never been particularly interested in writing the well-crafted pop song that works in your bedroom and that you can go to tell the others on your electric guitar. If something sounds like it should be over inches and heard on the radio, then we'll put it out as a single. I mean, if pop records are by definition songs that sell a lot, then we haven't written any yet. We don't want to make records that only justify their existence by the number they sell."

The new single has the lyrics written in a strange crossbetween English and bastard Greek. One gets the impression that when the Spaniards first trooped in Inca villages, they would have found this strange script on one of their temple walls.

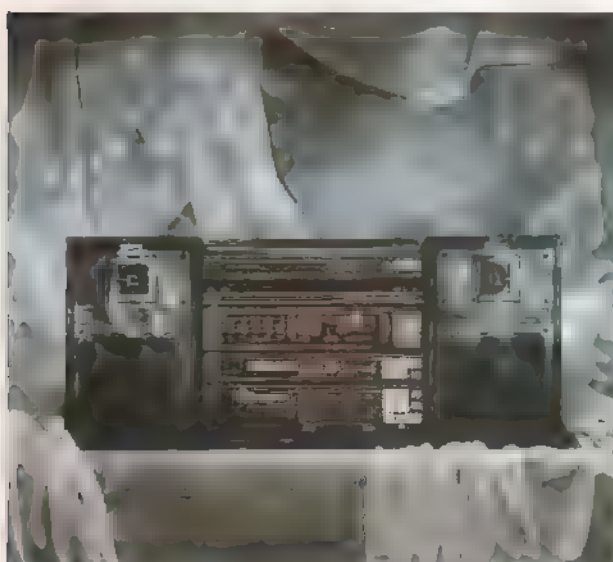
"It'd be nice to think that. Actually, our A&R man is always talking about a place called Shriekbackland. We've got a little more to him, and he's got a little more to us, and it's a little bit twisted. There's a logic to it, but it only works there. That's definitely where we belong."

In Shriekbackland they're cheering

but on the other hand.



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10,000 MANIACS

September 1984, the Marquee. Requisite "very metal" crowd, headbanging to a band called, appropriately enough for the venue, 10,000 Maniacs. But hang on — isn't that a girl in a granny frock on stage? Whirling and spinning and singing in a high clear voice ... and behind her are a bunch of decent looking chaps, soberly dressed and playing a very DIFFERENT kind of music ...

The Maniacs did three gigs in London to packed houses then disappeared back to Jamestown USA, a remote country town in the far north of New York State. Country music is played constantly on the radio in Jamestown; Lucille Ball was born there, and that's about it. It's a neighbouring town to those occupied by the Amish folk — a cult whose weird lifestyle has recently been highlighted in the film *Witness*.

The sound of 10,000 Maniacs has something to do with their hometown origins, and a lot to do with the fact that this group of keen intellects have absorbed a wide spectrum of musical traditions and interpreted this in a unique way. The result is a complicated blend of country,

bluegrass, R'n'B, folk and rock, and it's even led to a few suggestions that the Maniacs are derivative of bands like Lindisfarne and Fairport Convention.

"But nobody else is doing it," argues vocalist Natalie. "Nobody else is keeping that music alive. If you analyse the traditional music of the Irish, Scottish and British, then compare it to the traditional music of white America — Appalachian music, bluegrass — it is all from the same source."

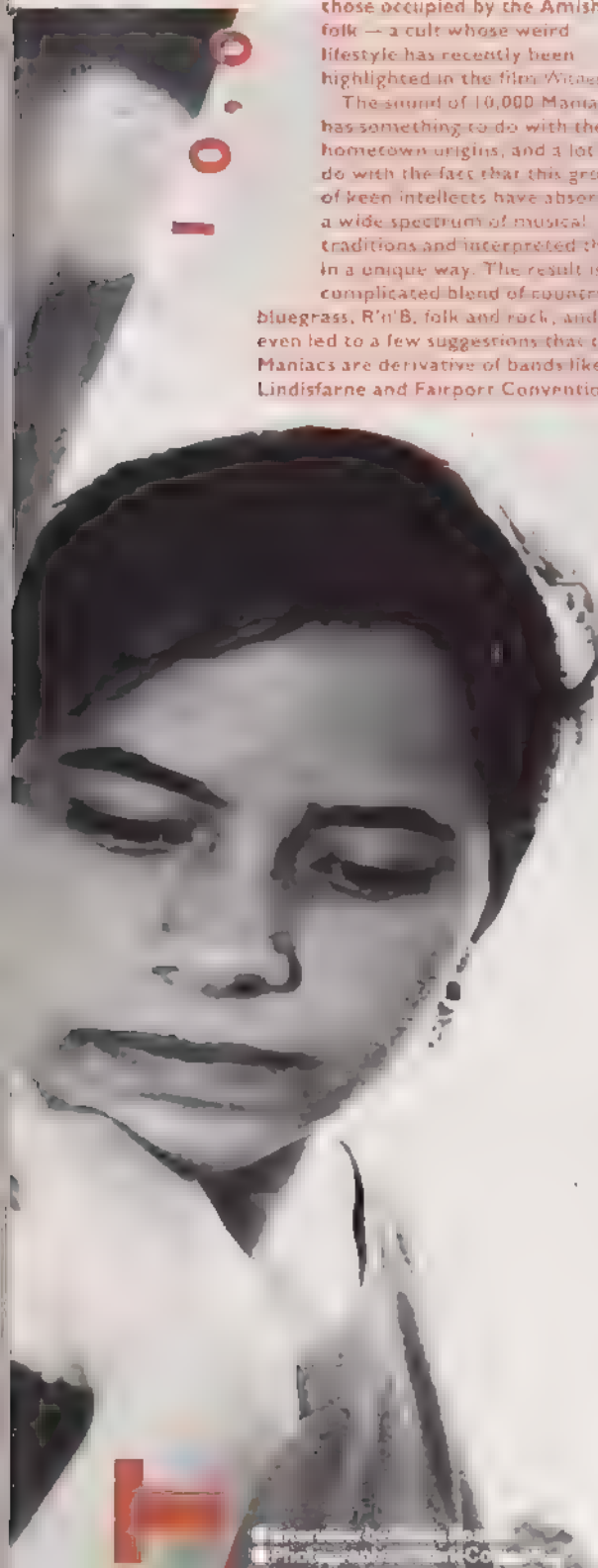
The name comes from a tacky 50's horror movie and was chosen when the group first got together over three years ago to play at a Halloween party. They proved so popular that after twenty gigs in quick succession, they hadn't found the time to change the name, so, effectively, they were stuck with it. They delight in incongruities however — Natalie's sweet voice belies her sometimes savage lyrics, and contrasts with the solid rhythm section and Rob Buck's searing guitar solos. "A lot of people have read the words of our songs and feel guilty that they've danced to the music," she confesses.

Since that Halloween party this determined group of musicians have arranged their own bookings, touring, maintained their own vehicle and equipment, travelled over 60,000 miles and somehow found time to independently record a 5-track EP *Maniacs*, and an album *Secrets of the Church*.

"If you live in a major city, you can play once every two weeks and media people will be there. But coming from Jamestown, which is so distant, we knew that nobody was going to come up there to see us. So we made these records and sent copies to clubs, radio stations and even, *see just in CASE*."

The result was not unlike a musical chain letter. They got feedback from other parts of the States, Europe and from John Peel, who played their records on his show, and started the ball rolling in the UK. The end product was a deal with WEA, and now the new album, *The Witness*, should be out by the time you read this.

Unpretentious and articulate, this band have something worth while to say. Listen to them, but don't feel guilty for wanting to dance to their music.





● "There's a certain aggressiveness with **Jason & the Scorchers**. It's not irreverence... It borders on a devil-may-care feeling. 'We can do it,' y'know! 'We can try this. Maybe we'll fall on our faces but we're gonna try.'"

Jason Ringenberg doesn't exactly look like the kind of bloke who falls on his face very often. Tall, sparsely built and possessed of a uniquely calm self-knowledge, he has been the leading light of the band since its inception some four years ago. Their best work can be witnessed on any live performance stage you'd care to mention. They deliver breathless rock and roll which incites similarly breathless reviews, from most critics at any rate; one American reporter wrote recently that they 'probably just want to be the next Rolling Stones.' Jason?

"Yeah, I'll get this one," he laughs. "Obviously he meant it in a derogatory way, but I took it as a huge compliment. He meant the Scorchers wanna drive around in a big Cadillac and snort cocaine all day. If we wanna be like the Rolling Stones it would be more in the sense of wanting to be around for ten or fifteen years."

He continues, more seriously: "See, this guy was saying in the article that if you want to Get Big you're committing some cardinal sin against music, and I think that's a load of trash. I mean that is *really* a load of trash. You have to reach a certain level of success, you have to, in order to survive. I'm not saying multi-platinum, just somewhat successful."

When I ask about their (seemingly) constant touring, his initial response is strangely tight-lipped: "Every person will have their personal opinions there, I would imagine," he replies through almost gritted teeth. But he goes on, easing up: "I like the home life a lot better than the road life, but of course the gig makes it all worth it. If the gigs are good I can sustain it for quite some time, and basically we've been on the road for three and a half years."

On stage — and on record to a lesser extent — Jason and the Scorchers are articulate, fervent, direct and thrillingly messy. Their set careers down the fine line between genius and madness, never very far away from coming off the rails. That Jerry Lee Lewis is an admitted hero of Jason's is hardly coincidence.

Last year the Scorchers were on the bill at Status Quo's 'farewell' concert. Natch, the Neanderthal crowd element had difficulty coping with them. "We didn't back down — not one inch," says Jason, shaking his head slowly. "At the end we were throwing bottles back at the audience. It was four against 60,000 but, well... we weren't afraid. Like I say, you have to have that attitude."

Odds mean absolutely nothing to this band.
Jay Williams

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NEW ALBUM & CASSETTE





● **Simply Red** crept up on me stealthily enough. First I heard the name — not a terribly good name at that — and heard word that there was a mighty voice behind it. The next thing was a very scratchy live recording made, I believe, on a small cassette machine, and played back to your correspondent at extremely high volume in the half-decorated Elektra offices. Clearly loud music was being given higher priority than wallpaper, and quite right, too. The next thing was a college date, at which various preconceptions about Simply Red were blown out of the nearest window, and several sets of record company eyebrows were elevated in unison. "Oh, yes", everyone agreed, "Oh yes indeed."

For Simply Red have a great deal going for them. They have *The Voice*, of course. *The Voice* belongs to Mick, who in turn tells us about which Simply Red revolves. It is a fine voice, quite capable of creditable covers of the odd Al Green number, a radical alternative interpretation of the Talking Heads song, *Heaven*, a faithful quotation of the Valentine Brothers' dancefloor hit, *Money's Too Tight To Mention* which is their debut single — and so on, and so forth. Apart from the voice, Simply Red exhibit a taste for a particular brand of eccentric steam hammer funk which caused me a great deal of arm waving whilst attempting to describe it.

"I think we're talking about the Stones, aren't we?" suggests Mick. "Everyone in the band is crazy about him." Yes I believe we are probably talking about the Family Stone, and we might as well talk about James Brown as well, since Simply Red are similarly unanimous in their admiration of the Hardest Working Man in showbusiness. Through circumstances which could be made to look poetic, Simply Red's first major London engagement, at the cavernous Hammersmith Odeon, was as support for Mister P... Please Himself. This turn-up for the books was, in Mick's opinion, like Jim'll Fix It. But support is not a position they intend to get comfortable in. Everything on the night is geared up towards the Main Event, and Simply Red have decided on that title. Providing they can cross the big hurdle — the problem that all dance bands seem to have with second hit records — there is no reason I can see why Simply Red shouldn't take their turn as *The Main Event*. Well, maybe the name...

"The name, really is 'Red'. We've been through all sorts of variations on it and we ended up with Simply Red but for me, the name is 'Red', and you can take the 'Simply...' or leave it. Maybe we should provide little bits of tape to cover over the 'Simply...' on the record sleeves if they want. I'm not standing up for the name very tall, am I?"

Marc Issue

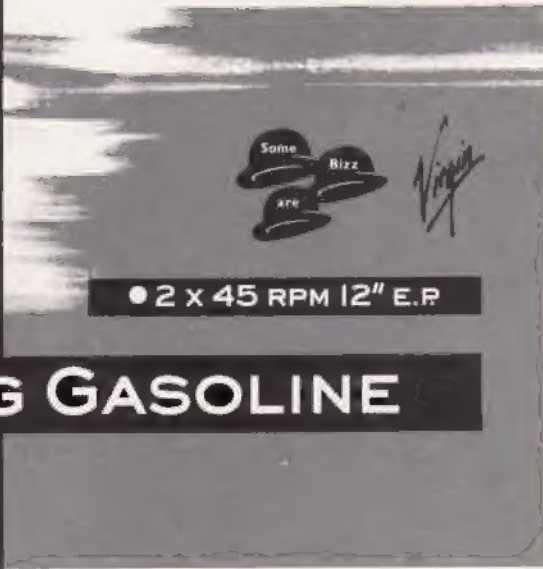
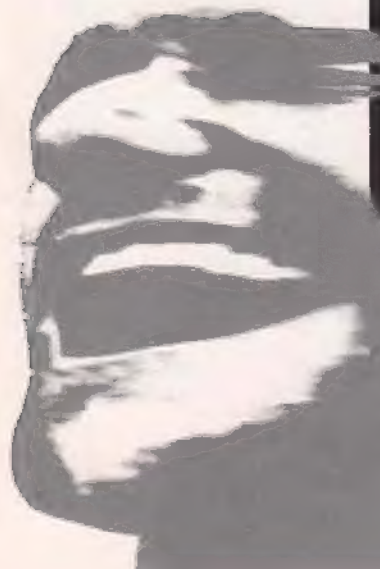


CABARET

VOL 1



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● In these increasingly sophisticated musical times, less and less emphasis is being placed on the notion of The Singer, to the extent that the emergence of anyone new who qualifies as such is accompanied by much tongue-wagging — celebrity through scarcity, as it were. The sudden interest in girl singers is perhaps born out of this, a desire to glimpse a drama somewhere in the echoing Fairlight. Of course such faith is usually misplaced, the New Jazz Tag being far more like the Old Sludge one but with smokier surroundings. For succour from the notion of The Singer, we have to look further, to the likes of Rickie Lee Jones, Anna Domino or... **Mathilde Santing**.

Contemporary torch singers, these three are capable of putting across strong, sometimes bittersweet slices of feeling somewhere on the edge of the pop blur and somewhat on the outside of pop's predominant concerns.

Santing is Dutch and her latest LP, *Water Under The Bridge*, is a heartening, if occasionally rather unwelcoming, example of the art of something more than just noise.

"I've always sung," Mathilde tells me one typically overcast summer's day. "In fact at the age of five I knew *The Sound Of Music* by heart. While I was growing though, I didn't know whether I wanted people to sit in silence while I sang or just to carry on talking with me singing in the background. I didn't want to sing in a pop group and the idea of performing with a jazz band seemed really boring as well, so singing to the tape machine seemed best. Soon I was approached to do an album but I didn't want to at first. I realised that I knew so very little about pop music, all the technicalities and everything. Anyway, eventually I did an album of cover versions and the record has been spreading like an oil spot for the last two years, never stopping selling, but without being a huge commercial success."

The new LP, *Water Under The Bridge*, has been a long time coming. It's not covers this time, but songs mainly written by Mathilde's close friend Dennie Duchhart. Again there'll

be people like me calling her a Torch Singer. Is she flattered or disgusted?

"Flattered, as far as I know what it means. I like the sound of the word too."

What about influences? The standards? "When I was young it was Ella and Sinatra and Ray Charles, then Janis Ian and Joan Armatrading. Now I'd say it's Sarah Vaughan and Dusty Springfield."

When you're so closely involved with the actual process of singing the song, is there a detachment from what you're singing about?

"I am very closely involved with the emotions of the song. Sometimes I will turn the original sentiment around, sometimes I will not say what I feel."

What about explicitly political songs?

"If they are good songs. I have to do what I do in a personal way, which, in the position I'm in, is a political thing. I don't have time to lecture other people on what they should be doing."

Discussion of Mathilde's feminist beliefs, particularly her active involvement in the Amsterdam feminist movement, threatens

to bring the interview to a swift conclusion as she is unwilling to talk about it in the context in which we find ourselves, fearing imbalance in a 600-word representation of the priorities in her life. What about its relationship to her career though? Will she have to sacrifice things coming to a big record company?

"I am not insecure about my ability to stick to my principles. The record company is necessary as a means for me to make the records I want. I could go to my father for the money or to a bank, but they wouldn't give it to me because they are not concerned with the music. So I go to a Music Bank like WEA and they put out my records. They will want a say in how I do things and I will have to reconcile it with the set idea of what I want to do."

Despite her claim that "things can sometimes be really boring" in her songs, *Water Under The Bridge* is well worth checking out, a reassurance that the Torch is still burning.

Paul Mathur



● A Mamba she was, a Willing Sinner she now is. Some of the less well informed might dismiss her with a cruel "Annie who?" but **Annie Hogan** has been responsible for some high quality ivory tinkling in accompaniment to the illustrious Marc Almond and is venturing solo this month with her debut EP, *Annie Hogan Plays Kick-a-byes*.

A native of Birkenhead, Annie left home at 18 to attend a course in Politics at Leeds University. However, an academic life proved less than seductive and Ms Hogan left after one year of study to turn her attentions to DJ-ing at local clubs Amnesia and the Phonographique. It was during one of these stints that she was introduced to one Marc Almond and a friendship quickly blossomed, to the extent that she ended by setting up shack in his flat with a casual reference to the fact that she'd been playing piano since the age of 12. Annie was consequently engaged as a full time Mamba on the premier *Sleeze/Fun City 12* and the rest, as they say, is well documented history.

Aside from her Mambas/Willing Sinners activities, Annie has distinguished herself with contributions to various projects including the notorious Immaculate Consumptive (the Almond, Nick Cave, Lydia Lynch, Clint Ruin marriage made in hell) and Nick Cave's cover to end all others, *In The Ghetto*. Two escapades that earned her some valuable friends:

"When I did the backing tracks for *In The Ghetto* I really wanted Nick to sing something that I'd written. I thought, 'Shall I ask him? Shan't I ask him?' and I eventually did. He was really great about it, I was really surprised! It sounds pathetic, but everyone's been really kind. I've been very lucky with the people I've worked with — Nick singing and Budgie (*Banshee*) playing percussion. But I don't want it to be too emphasised, like 'Annie Hogan plays with the stars!' These are people I'm friends with and they've been kind enough to devote some time to me."

Of the future Annie is cautious, treating her *Kick-a-byes* venture as a means by which to test the critical water, safe in the knowledge that she has the Willing Sinners to return to should the going get rough.

"I would like to do another solo thing like a mini-LP or another EP hopefully this year," she muses. "I want to carry on with Marc because I love being in a band and gigging. I don't feel there'd be any point in me signing to a big record company, even if they'd have me! I'd feel constricted into doing a certain amount of things on their terms and I don't really want to do that. I'd rather put things out on an independent basis. I want to keep doing my own stuff because I enjoy it and I think it's good for me, but I want to keep it as a parallel to what I do with Marc."

An appealing character is Ms Hogan. Small and slight with obvious ability and commitment but a natural modesty, she flinches slightly at the thought of baring herself to the merciless vultures of the music press.

"I think that this EP will probably get slagged to pieces. Especially if they hear me sing, that'll cause a few chuckles..."

We shall see.

Claire Morgan Jones



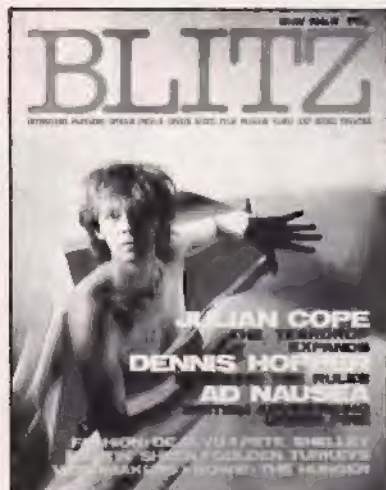
BACK ISSUES

4. AUTUMN 81 Police man Andy Summers reveals all; Haircut 100 — the first interview; Raiders of the Lost Ark; Gilbert & George; James Cameron, gentleman journalist.

5. WINTER 81 Stephen Linard & Fiona Dealey; Marianne Faithfull; The Rock Press; Belle Stars; Patrick Caulfield.

6. SPRING 82 Hunter Thompson; The sartorial elegance of Nick Heyward, Mick Karn, Kim Wilde, Belle Stars & Ronny; Bill Forsyth; Ugly George.

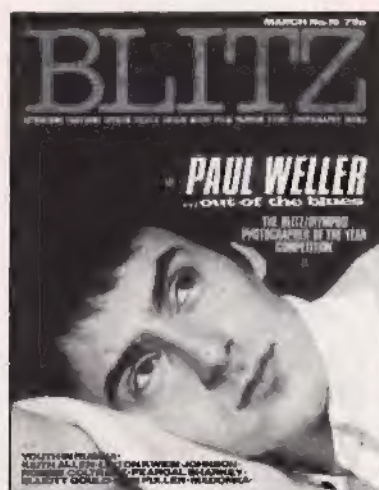
10. APRIL 83 Paul Morley; French & Saunders; Everything But The Girl; Tim Page's Vietnam; Return of the Jedi; Attentive Interiors; Frank Zappa.



11. MAY 83 Julian Cope; What's Wrong with British Advertising?; Dennis Hopper; Bowie — Hunger preview; Worst of Hollywood; Martin Sheen; Pete Shelley.



13. JULY/AUG 83 Record Sleeve Designers; Rick Baker special effects; Yello; Tony Wilson, Paul Haig; Jack Kerouac.



19. MARCH 84 Paul Weller; Keith Allen; Linton Kwesi Johnson; Feargal Sharkey; Robbie Coltrane; Life in Russia; Sam Fuller; Elliott Gould.



24. SEPT 84 Nick Rhodes; Gary Kemp; Best of BLITZ; Mel Smith; BLITZ/Olympus Photography Competition Winners; Company of Wolves; Tim Roth; Fela Kuti.



25. OCT 84 Boy George writes about the Media; Neil Kinnock and the selling of the Labour Party; Aztec Camera; Miles Copeland; Shock Headed Peters; Nicholas Coleridge; History of the Showroom Dummy.



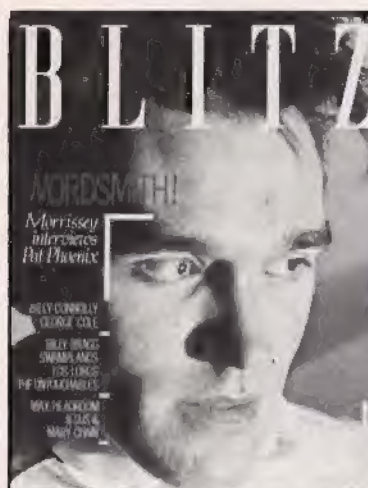
28. FEB 85 Anne Pigalle; Tom Bailey; BLITZ guide to New York; Jean Michel Jarre; Streetsounds; Pet Shop Boys; Morley on pop stars and music journalism.



29. MARCH 85 Paul Young; Katharine Hamnett; Steven Berkoff; Terry Gilliam; Dennis Skinner MP; Little Benny; Suzanna Hamilton.



30. APRIL 85 Julie Walters; Robert Palmer; the Advertising Industry examined; Yello; Guardian Angels; Tony Doyle; Bill Nelson; Chakk; Diamanda Galas.



31. MAY 85 Morrissey interviews Pat Phoenix; Billy Connolly; George Cole; Billy Bragg; Swamplands; The Untouchables; Los Lobos; Severed Heads; Jesus & Mary Chain.

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32. JUNE 85 Scritti Politti; Pete Townshend; Nic Roeg & Insignificance; Prefab Sprout; Fine Young Cannibals; Allen Ginsberg; Alex Cox; Stephen Linard; Woodentops.

TALKING HEADS

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NEW ALBUM & CASSETTE

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